Exploring the “Aha” Moment: The Process of Conscious Awareness During the Early Stages of Relationship Development

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Abstract

The early stages of romantic relationships can be filled with uncertainty. One major cause of uncertainty in the early stages of relationship development is whether or not one has entered into an actual relationship. Furthermore, people who experience uncertainty are generally motivated to engage in information seeking to reduce it. Given the importance of romantic relationships in people’s lives, the overarching question this dissertation sought to answer is: “How do people become aware that they have entered into a romantic relationship?” Relationship awareness was defined as a process of information seeking by an individual to come to a judgment to determine if he or she has entered into a relationship. Previous research has found that people seek information from four sources: cognitive, emotional, social network, and behavioral information. This study surveyed emerging adults (ages 18-25) and adults (ages 26 and up) to test a proposed model of relationship awareness. SEM results revealed that relationship awareness is a process of information seeking and uncertainty management, and confirmed that people generally rely on the four aforementioned information sources to become aware of the status of their relationship. Furthermore, the results revealed that information seeking mediates the relationship between relationship uncertainty appraisals and relationship awareness, and each mediated path seems to affect relationship awareness fairly equally. Lastly, the results suggest that the relationship awareness process may be adaptive to changes from one developmental life stage to another. Study limitations and implications for future research are discussed.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

John and Sara have been dating for about a month. They both find each other attractive, and they seem to enjoy each other’s company. John and Sara are still uncertain about whether what they have will turn into a relationship. John and Sara find each other attractive, but they are still uncertain about their status as a couple. Both of them spend time thinking about what they want out of a relationship, and how they feel about each other. They both also pay a lot of attention to the other’s behaviors and notice changes in their behavior. Likewise, they are finding that their friends and family are also curious about their dating status. Naturally, John and Sara are both curious about their friends and family’s perceptions about their new potential relationship partner. While they both want a long-term relationship, they both understand the costs of making a bad choice. They both weigh the information carefully and make a conclusion about whether or not they are in an actual relationship. It is this process of how people become aware that they are in an actual relationship that is the focus of this dissertation.

Romantic relationships are a central facet of most people’s lives (Berscheid, 1999). As a result, humans are motivated to seek out meaningful relationships with others (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Baumeister and Leary (1995) argued that humans derive cognitive, emotional, psychological, and social benefits from developing and maintaining meaningful relationships. However, individuals are not merely motivated to seek out any relationship; ideally they want a quality relationship with a quality partner.

According to U.S. Census Bureau data 46% of men and 49% of women ages 15 and over were single; classified as never married, widowed, or divorced (Kreider & Ellis, 2011). Although this statistic does not account for the number of single people in
romantic relationships, the statistic does indicate that millions of Americans are single. Also, many of these people are likely looking to initiate new relationships. In fact, finding love has become big business. Since the turn of the century, online dating has become highly profitable and has become a $2.1 billion industry according to Forbes magazine (Bercovici, 2014, Feb. 14). The fact that online dating has become such big business highlights the natural human demand for people to develop a quality relationship with another. In fact, many dating site commercials often highlight their success stories to inspire new customers who are looking for love. Yet, most people seek long-term satisfying relationships with quality partners regardless of age or life circumstances (Bartholomew, 1990; Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Reis & Shaver, 1988; Stewart, Stinnet, & Rosenfeld, 2000; Taylor, Rappleyea, Fang, & Cannon, 2013). Additionally, many people in older generations are finding themselves looking for new relationships due to divorce, the death of a relationship partner, or simply waiting longer to get married and start a family (Kreider & Ellis, 2011; Livingston, Parker, & Rohal 2014).

Moreover, humans are generally very good at finding mates, yet many people often misinterpret other people’s romantic intentions toward them. Misinterpretations can be awkward and embarrassing (Cupach & Spitzberg, 2008), not to mention the negative emotional consequences as a result of rejection from a potential partner (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Also, coupling can be complicated, as one must successfully navigate through the vast amount of information in the social environment to become aware of whether or not one has successfully entered into a relationship. The relationship literature has suggested that people generally rely upon four major sources of information in romantic relationships: cognitive (Agnew Van Lange, Rusbult, & Langston, 1998; Aron,
Aron, Tudor, & Nelson, 1991; Baldwin, 1992; Fletcher, Simpson, & Thomas, 2000), emotional (Birnie-Porter & Lydon, 2013; Fraley & Shaver, 2000; Gonzaga, Campos, & Bradbury, 2007; Winterheld & Simpson, 2011), social (Agnew, Loving, & Drigotas, 2001; Etcheverry & Agnew, 2004; Loving, 2006; Sprecher, 2011; Sprecher & Felmlee, 2000), and behavioral information (Dindia, 1994; Reis & Clark, 2013; Weigel, 2008; Weigel & Ballard-Reisch, 2002). The question remains: How do people utilize various relationship information sources to become aware that they are in a relationship?

Even though many people successfully enter into satisfying long-term relationships, not all relationships are successful. For example, what happens when people enter a relationship and they find out they are with the wrong person? There are high opportunity costs for making such an error (Buss & Schmitt, 1993). Opportunity costs refer to costs associated with lost mating opportunities due to entering into a monogamous relationship (see Buss & Schmitt, 1993 for a review). First of all, not all relationships will make it past the early stages of relationship development; they will simply dissipate for a multitude of reasons. Sometimes people initially enter into a relationship based on mutual attraction (Lloyd, Cate, & Henton, 1984; Weber, 1998). Physical attraction and related phenomena are part of passion (Sternberg, 1986). People can be instantaneously attracted, physically or otherwise, and that passionate spark advances rapidly but also peaks quickly (Sternberg, 1986). In other words, attraction eventually fades, and one or both partners may find that they have nothing in common with the other. In other cases, two people may enter into a relationship only to have external forces outside of one or both partners’ control thwart the relationship.
Unsuccessful couplings can have severe emotional consequences (Baumeister & Leary, 1995) as well as missed opportunity costs (Kaplan & Gangestad, 2005).

Correspondingly, there are many complex cultural rules about initiating relationships and showing romantic interest. Culture provides rules for socially acceptable behaviors, and every human society has or has had cultural rules governing acceptable courtship behaviors (Baumeister, 2005). These complex cultural rules make human mating vastly more complex, compared to other species.

The complexity of human mating often leads to high degrees of uncertainty in developing relationships. Research has suggested that the early relationship development can be an emotionally volatile period at moderate levels of intimacy (Knobloch & Solomon, 2002, 2005). Thus, the early stages of a relationship can be one of the most uncertain phases in one’s relationship. Uncertainty can cause people to experience a wide array of emotions at various intensities (Brashers, 2001). This period of uncertainty is often a crucial time for a relationship as partners build trust and become increasingly more intimate. Information gathering lessens much of the uncertainty associated with one’s partner during early relationship development, thus helping the individual to ascertain their partner’s intentions (Berger & Calabrese, 1975; Knobloch & Solomon, 1999).

Given the high costs of choosing the wrong mate and the unique human need to navigate cultural mating rules, evolutionary logic dictates that individuals have evolved mechanisms for becoming aware of successfully entering a relationship. Additionally, any mating mechanism adapted for relationship awareness must also provide adaptive benefits so that humans can successfully adapt to cultural mating demands. However, this
does not necessarily imply that because one is aware that they have entered a relationship that individuals are skilled at knowing if they have entered a quality relationship.

Interestingly little research has examined the issue of exploring mechanisms adapted to help humans become aware of their relationship status, particularly during early relationship development. To date, this process is still somewhat mysterious.

Much of what we know about early relationships has centered on attraction. Attraction research has found that people are attracted to others who have similar backgrounds, values, attitudes, etc. (Altman & Taylor, 1973; Byrne, 1971; Duck, 1973; Duck & Craig, 1977; Knapp, 1978; Ogolsky, Lloyd & Cate, 2013). People also want to enter into relationships with those they find physically attractive (Lee, Loewenstein, Ariely, Hong, & Young, 2008). Also, research has examined the development of romantic relationships beyond attraction. Much of the research on relationship development started in the 1970’s and was motivated by various stage theories (Altman & Taylor, 1973; Duck, 1973; Duck & Craig, 1977; Knapp, 1978). Even so, perhaps the most enduring study on relationship development was conducted by Baxter and Bullis (1986), who examined relationship turning points. Baxter and Bullis defined relationship turning points as relationship events that result in the escalation of relationship commitment. Examples of turning points in early relationship development include the first kiss, first time saying I love you, and meeting his or her partner’s family. Baxter and Bullis conducted independent qualitative interviews of 80 relationship partners; results indicated that participants identified 26 relationship turning points. Furthermore, Baxter and Bullis found that half of the reported turning points did not involve any explicit metacommunication. The results indicated that participants might not have mutually
understood the meaning of some turning points since participant did not agree on the meaning of the turning points.

Despite all of the knowledge that has been obtained about attraction and partner preferences, relationship turning points, and relationship uncertainty over the past 20 - 40 years, research has yet to understand much of the process of early relationship development beyond initial attraction. Specifically, research has yet to examine how one knows if they are in an actual relationship with another person. As previously mentioned, much of the relationship literature has suggested that people utilize four primary sources of information to determine the status of their relationship: cognition (Agnew, et al., 1998; Aron et al., 1991; Baldwin, 1992; Fletcher, et al., 2000), emotional (Birnie-Porter & Lydon, 2013; Fraley & Shaver, 2000; Gonzaga, et al., 2007; Winterheld & Simpson, 2011), social (Agnew, et al., 2001; Etcheverry & Agnew, 2004; Loving, 2006; Sprecher, 2011; Sprecher & Felmlee, 2000), and behavioral information (Dindia, 1994; Reis & Clark, 2013; Weigel, 2008; Weigel & Ballard-Reisch, 2002). Research has not yet begun to examine how people utilize these various information sources to become aware of whether or not they have successfully entered into a relationship. Understanding how these information sources influence relationship awareness will help researchers begin to understand factors (beyond attraction) that influence early relationship development. Furthermore, examining the relationship between information seeking and relationship awareness will help researchers better understand the factors related to relationship judgments during the early stages of developing relationships, specifically whether or not one is in an actual relationship.
The primary goal of the dissertation is to take the first step in understanding how people engage in information seeking to become aware that they have entered into a romantic relationship. In order to meet the primary goal of the dissertation, this project will be guided by three guiding research questions. The first guiding research question is what is the relationship between one’s desired level of uncertainty and information seeking during early relationship development? The second guiding question is how does each of the information sources influence relationship awareness? Lastly the third guiding research question is whether one or more of the information sources is more influential in obtaining relationship awareness?

In order to begin to understand the relationship between uncertainty and relationship awareness, this dissertation will apply uncertainty management theory (UMT; Brashers, 2001) and the theory of motivated information management (TMIM; Afifi & Weiner, 2004). Traditionally, researchers have used uncertainty reduction theory (URT) as the underlying theoretical framework for studying uncertainty (Berger & Calabrese, 1975). However, some theorists have expressed concerns about URT’s assumption that uncertainty is usually an aversive experience that motivates people to engage in information seeking to reduce anxiety (Brashers, 2001; Sunnafrank, 1988, 1990). On the other hand, the UMT and TMIM perspectives both recognize the potential for people to experience a wide array of emotional outcomes, which may or may not motivate people to reduce their current level of uncertainty.

**Overview of the Dissertation**

The purpose of this dissertation is to present the results of the proposed study examining the relationship between information seeking and relationship awareness
during early relationship development. Utilizing UMT and TMIM, this dissertation will test a conceptual model of information seeking and relationship awareness. In order to test this model, the dissertation will examine how people use the four previously mentioned information sources to become aware that they have entered into a relationship. Chapter 2 will present sections on the early relationship development, relationships in emerging adulthood, and relationship awareness, and introduce previous theoretical perspectives on relationship development. Chapter 2 will also describe the underlying theoretical perspectives of the dissertation focusing on Uncertainty Reduction Theory (Berger & Calabrese, 1975), Uncertainty Management Theory (Brashers, 2001), and the Theory of Motivated Information Management (Afifi & Weiner, 2004) to explain why people are motivated to seek information. Lastly, Chapter 2 will conclude by presenting the study hypothesis and research questions.

Chapter 3 will present the proposed research method for this project. This research will consist of a survey comprised of two convenience samples. The first sample will consist of college students from the Social Science subject pool (SONA) and the second sample will consist of adult from MTurk. The chapter will lay out the measures for the primary variables in the model, and will conclude with a section outlining the planned analyses. Chapter 4 will discuss the analytic strategy that I used in the dissertation and then present the results. The dissertation will conclude with chapter five which will summarize the results in relation to the underlying theories, discuss the implications of the results and directions for future research.
Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

The purpose of this chapter is to provide background into theory and research on early relationship development and relationship awareness, as well as describe the proposed model under investigation. The chapter will begin with a description of the state of romantic relationships and will provide a broader picture of relationship formation among adults in the United States. The chapter will then compare and contrast relationships in adulthood and emerging adulthood. Afterward, the discussion will move to relationship awareness. Then the chapter will discuss theories of relationship development. Next, the chapter will discuss theories of uncertainty reduction, uncertainty management, and information seeking, and will outline a proposed model of the role of information seeking in relationship awareness. Lastly, this chapter will conclude with the hypothesis and research questions for this dissertation.

Relationship Statistics

As mentioned in the previous chapter, relationships are a central focus in most people’s lives (Agnew et al., 1998). Many people are motivated to enter into quality long-term relationships (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Taylor et al., 2013). Some relationships will last a lifetime while other relationships will dissolve. Of those who experience relationship dissolution, many will enter into new relationships (Kreider & Ellis, 2011). The following statistics provide a picture of relationships in the United States.

Marriage is no longer the primary goal for everyone who enters into a relationship (Cherlin, 2007). In fact as of 2009, the U.S. Census Bureau reported that marriages among younger adults 18-29 have decreased while cohabitation has steadily increased (Kreider & Ellis, 2011). For most people in our society marriage is a choice, and
generally those who do seek marriage seem to enter into stable relationships. The American Community Survey, conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau reported that between 2008 and 2012 approximately 77% of married respondents were in their first marriage. Also, the survey reported that approximately 19% had married twice, and approximately 4% had married three or more times (Lewis & Kreider, 2015). Furthermore, approximately half of those who were in their first marriage were likely to remain married. Additionally in 2013, 40% of people who got married, at least one spouse had previously been married (Livingston et al., 2014).

Statistics on cohabitation seem to be following a similar trend. According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human services, over 60% of young adults (ages 21-24) have formed a relationship. Seventy-three of those who are in relationships are dating or cohabitating (Wood, Avellar, & Goesling, 2008). Furthermore, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) reports that 48% of women ages 15 - 44 chose to cohabit at the time of their first union with a romantic partner between 2006 and 2010. Additionally, the CDC reported that 40% of women’s cohabitating relationships entered into marriage, 32% remained intact as cohabitating unions, and 25% ended in dissolution.

The previous statistics indicate that forming a close relationship is a common occurrence for many adults. Additionally, many adults will initiate two or more long-term relationships in their lifetimes (Lewis & Kreider, 2015). Moreover, the statistics suggest that people generally seek to initiate stable, long-term relationships. In fact, the statistics indicate that in general people are good at identifying partners with whom they can enter a quality long-term relationship, even though it may take more than one attempt to obtain that relationship. Rusbult and Buunk (1993) argued that behaviors communicate one’s
long-term orientation to a relationship. In fact, the statistics indicate that even those who are unsuccessful in their first relationship will continue to seek out a quality relationship in the future (Lewis & Kreider, 2015). Next, the paper will provide an overview of emerging adulthood, adulthood, and relationships.

**Emerging Adulthood, Adulthood, and Relationships**

Before I begin this section I wish to define emerging adulthood and adulthood for the purposes of this dissertation. For this dissertation emerging adults refers to people ages 18-25, and adults refers to people 26 and over. Note that the developmental scientists generally define adulthood as ranging from ages 26 to 65, and late adulthood is defined runs from age 65 on (Erikson, 1950, 1968). In this dissertation the adult sample does include a few people over the age of 65, but not enough to analyze as a separate group. As a consequence, participants that would traditionally fit into late adulthood have been included with adults for practical purposes only, and my definition is not intended to redefine well-accepted developmental stages.

Over the past two decades, an abundance of research has examined differences in relationships between emerging adults (ages 18-25) and adults (ages 26 and up). Much of the attention surrounding emerging adults has focused on the “hook up culture”, which has been discussed in both academic contexts (i.e. Bogle, 2008), and the media. Emerging adulthood has generally been presented as a stage in which immoral acts are committed by youth (Taylor et al., 2013). Although many emerging adults engage in premarital sex, they are more likely to be focused on relationships that allow for deeper levels of intimacy (Arnett, 2000). Much of the work on emerging adulthood has sampled college students, so it can be quite difficult to generalize these findings to emerging
adults in general. However, emerging adults are entering college at higher rates today than in the past (Taylor et al., 2013). College student samples are closer to the general population of emerging adults today than at any other time in the past. Additionally, many of these students live in “fishbowl” environments, such as dorms and fraternal organizations. These “fishbowl” environments are qualitatively different from adults who are no longer in college and have entered the workforce (Bogle, 2008). In this section, I will discuss the differences between emerging adults and adults in terms of relationships, identity, and sex.

**Relationships.** There is a common misbelief that emerging adults are not as interested in forming and maintaining relationships as their adult counterparts (Taylor et al., 2013). As mentioned previously, much of the misbelief about emerging adults’ lack of interest in relationships has been attributed to academics' recent realization of a “hook-up culture” among our country’s college youth (Arnett, 2000; Bogle, 2008; Taylor et al., 2013). However, research suggests that emerging adults are in fact very interested in developing meaningful relationships (Arnett, 2000; Taylor et al., 2013). What has changed is the way that emerging adults enter into relationships. The days of traditional dating have changed. Instead, emerging adults meet potential partners in a more relaxed group setting referred to as “hanging out” (Taylor et al., 2013). Hanging out is often the preferred method for emerging adults because it allows people to meet and to interact in a more informal environment. Additionally, emerging adults generally initiate relationships within groups, which suggests that peers are more likely to be influential compared to parents or other family members (Bogle, 2008). In fact, parental disapproval can often
motivate emerging adults to continue with a relationship despite parental objections; a process referred to as the Romeo and Juliet phenomenon (Felmlee, 2006).

So, if emerging adults are hanging out instead of dating, does that mean this age group does not date at all? Not necessarily, findings from a focus group study conducted by Davis and Weigel (2013) indicated that participants (70% emerging adults) reserved dating for established relationships due to the formality associated with it. Some participants in the study indicated that hanging out occurred because the informal nature of meeting potential partners within their social networks allowed intimacy to grow without the pressure associated with dating. Additionally, Davis and Weigel (2013) found that most participants indicated that they were more likely to engage in dating behaviors once a relationship was established.

Emerging adults are also more likely to engage in cohabitation in serious relationships and to put off marriage (Taylor et al., 2013). Arnett has attributed the likelihood of emerging adults to cohabitate to the opportunity for emerging adults to explore life experiences without the constraints associated with youth and marriage, as many view marriage as an adult commitment (Arnett, 2000, 2007). There are also practical concerns with many emerging adults moving in with their partners to reduce living costs.

Conversely, adults no longer live in a fishbowl environment and research suggests that they are more likely to engage in traditional dating behaviors (Bogle, 2008). However, unlike their younger counterparts, meeting people to date becomes much more challenging. Therefore, adults may be more likely to diversify the ways they meet new people (Sprecher, Schwartz, Harvey, & Hatfield, 2008). Sometimes people meet at work
(Malachowski, Chory, & Claus, 2012; Williams, Giuffre, & Dellinger, 1999); others meet online (Mckenna, 2008; Sprecher et al., 2008), while others prefer to pursue potential partners who are part of their existing social network (Guerrero & Mongeau, 2008).

Additionally, many adult men and women are now ready to begin to settle down and start a family. Consequentially, these men and women are looking for a partner who matches their relationship goals of a long-term relationship and potentially even marriage. Thus, adults organize relationship strategies to meet their goals (Dindia, 1994; Guerrero, Eloy, & Wabnik, 1993; Miller & Read, 1991). Many adults simply do not find hooking up or hanging out to be effective pursuits in looking for long-term mates once they have left college (Bogle, 2008).

Also, for adults, family members have a great deal of social influence on relationships (Etcheverry & Agnew, 2004), particularly parents. This may be because as one enters adulthood and takes on more responsibility including family obligations, one has less time for friends as they did when they were younger. Additionally, parents and adult children might discover that they have more in common than in the past. Lastly, family members are also more likely to invest in helping out with family demands (Buss, 1989; Buss & Schmitt, 1993).

**Identity.** Emerging adults generally do not see themselves as being a child or a teenager, but they generally do not see themselves as an adult yet either (Arnett, 2000, Taylor et al., 2013). According to Arnett (2000), emerging adulthood is a time of transition for most people in this stage of life. Arnett goes on to explain this period is unstructured and volatile, but it is also full of exploration. For many emerging adults, this is a time of optimism associated with excitement and possibility, however this time can
also lead to feelings of disillusionment, disappointment, and the possibility of rejection (Arnett, 2000). From this perspective, emerging adults find themselves figuring out who they are and what they want out of life. Interestingly at this time in life, the brain is still not mature (Taylor et al., 2013). Thus, some might argue that emerging adults have not yet completely grown up, but they are also no longer children (Arnett, 2000).

In contrast, adults have generally established their identity by age 30 (Arnett, 2007); however, identity formation can be considered a lifespan topic as becoming a widow/widower, retiring, or losing the physical attractiveness and vitality of younger years often result in shifts in identity (Erikson, 1998). Additionally, the lives of adults are generally more structured, and their lives generally revolve around work and family obligations (Heller & Watson, 2005). Since most adults have an established identity, it would seem most likely that they are also more certain about the goals that they wish to achieve, such as work, relationship, family, or general life goals. Additionally, adults have more obligations (Arnett, 2000) and less social time (Sprecher et al., 2008).

**Sex.** Sex has a large impact on most close relationships (Baxter & Bullis, 1986; Metts, 2004). Sex is important to both emerging adults and adults. Additionally, both emerging adults and adults have sexual scripts that guide their sexual behavior (Bogle, 2008; Gagnon, 1990). However, for emerging adults, this is often a time of sexual exploration (Arnett, 2000; Bogle, 2008; Taylor et al., 2013). Additionally, since many emerging adults live on college campuses, they are living in a fishbowl environment; living on campus, in dorms, fraternities, or sororities. This fishbowl environment provides emerging adults with many opportunities to hook up (Bogle, 2008). Similarly, the fact that many emerging adults live in such close quarters increases the likelihood that
the individual knows the person whom they are getting involved with, which may reduce the perceived risk of a sexual encounter.

In contrast, as mentioned previously, adults do not have access to large volumes of people who might be willing sexual partners. In fact, it is quite likely that people frown upon the use of hooking up behaviors outside of college (Bogle, 2008). Additionally, as mentioned before adults are more likely to have goals that are associated with long-term relationships that might have marriage potential. The adult focus on long-term relationships suggests that adults will more likely look for sex in secure relationships and that sexual intimacy will be closely associated with overall relationship satisfaction (Sprecher & Cate, 2004). However, this is not to suggest that sexual intimacy is not associated with satisfaction among emerging adults, as many emerging adults will learn about sexual intimacy through the explorative phase of emerging adulthood. Next, the discussion will move to a definition of relationship awareness.

**Relationship Awareness**

Research on relationship awareness is limited; nevertheless, some research has investigated the construct. Perhaps the first explicit study of relationship awareness came from Acitelli (1992), who conducted a qualitative study on relational awareness in married couples. Acitelli focused on describing relational awareness through relationship talk, which she operationalized as statements about the relationship. Acitelli sampled 42 couples from a list of couples that had applied for marriage licenses and had been married 2 to 5 years. Acitelli interviewed the couples together in their homes. The interviews started with a couple of icebreakers. The icebreakers were then followed up by two questions: One about the good times in the couple's marriage, and one about the
unpleasant things in their lives since being married. Acitelli coded couples’ responses for frequency of relationship talk. Scores were obtained for each of the spouses in the study for frequency and time spent on relationship talk. Additionally, each spouse answered a questionnaire away from their partner, which assessed relational well-being, stability, and overall life satisfaction.

Acitelli’s (1992) study provided extremely rich detail about the influence of verbal talk on relational awareness, especially for women. Acitelli’s study provided preliminary evidence that people could not only communicate their awareness to others, but that relationship talk also appeared to increase participant’s awareness of their partner’s thoughts. Although women spent considerably more time talking about their relationships than men did, both men and women were able to report on their relationship. In fact, men’s relationship talk positively influenced women’s relational well-being, while women’s relationship talk had no effect on their relational well-being. Interestingly, relationship talk from either spouse did not have any effect on husbands’ relational well-being.

Acitelli (1992) concluded that women’s relational well-being was more likely to be influenced by relationship talk than men, because women are generally more relationally oriented. Acitelli further reasoned that since men generally do not focus on their relationships as women do, they were less likely to be influenced by relational talk. Thus, men’s relationship talk should be more likely to positively affect women’s relational well-being, while men’s relational well-being should not be affected by relationship talk from either spouse. Also, Acitelli speculated that other aspects of
relationship awareness might be associated with relationship thinking and that men might be more likely to focus on other aspects of relationship awareness.

Recent research on relationship awareness has examined mental representations of relationships and relationship partners (Agnew, at al., 1998; Aron, et al., 1991; Chen, Boucher, & Tapias, 2006; Miller & Read, 1991; Tomlinson & Aron, 2013). Miller and Read (1991) argued that people construct mental models of their relationship and their partner, which become increasingly more complex as the relationship develops. Miller and Read further argued that these mental models provide coherence so that people can obtain meaning from their interactions with significant others. Similarly, Agnew et al. (1998) argued that committed couples develop a pluralistic representation of the relationship, which they called cognitive interdependence. Agnew et al. (1998) further argued that there were three aspects of cognitive interdependence: 1) inclusion of other in the self, 2) centrality of the relationship, and 3) plural thoughts about self and partner (i.e., we vs. I). Agnew et al. also argued that cognitive interdependence should be stronger in romantic relationships than platonic relationships. Agnew et al. conducted two studies to test their assumptions. Study 1 consisted of a cross-sectional survey of 200 individuals. The researchers told individuals who were in relationships to respond to the questions about their current partner. Conversely, they told those who were not currently in a romantic relationship to respond to the survey about their best friend.

Agnew et al. (1998) measured three aspects of cognitive interdependence. The first aspect was measured by using the Inclusion of others in the self scale (Aron, Aron, & Smollan, 1992) to measure cognitive overlap between relationship partners. The second aspect was measured by using the relationship centrality measure (Agnew et al.,
1998), which measured the degree to which individuals' relationships were a central focus in their lives. Lastly for the third aspect, the researchers used a thought-listing paradigm to measure plural thoughts. Independent raters coded each of the listed thoughts for use in subsequent quantitative analyses. Agnew et al. also measured relationship commitment and its theorized predictors (satisfaction, quality of alternatives, and relationship investment; Rusbult, 1983), with the investment model scale (Rusbult, Martz, & Agnew, 1998). The results indicated that commitment predicted more pronoun usage, increased perceptions of closeness between self and partner, and more reports of the relationship being a central focus.

In study 2, 76 undergraduate participants were recruited to take part in a two-wave study (Agnew et al., 1998). The researchers randomly assigned participants to one of two conditions (romantic relationship group and friendship group). All participants completed a questionnaire. Researchers asked participants in the romantic relationship group to answer the questions about their current relationship partner or their most recent partner if they were not currently in a relationship. Conversely, researchers asked participants in the friendship group to fill out the questionnaire about their best friend, who was defined as someone other than their relationship partner. Participants completed a follow-up questionnaire after six weeks. The measures used in study 2 were identical to those in study 1. Results indicated that commitment and cognitive independence mutually influenced each other. Additionally, Agnew et al. reported that the association of cognitive interdependence with close friends was weak or non-existent. Agnew et al. concluded that the relationship between cognitive interdependence and commitment is likely unique to romantic relationships.
In short, pluralistic representations symbolize a cognitive shift in which individuals in relationship move from a focus on me to we. Also, the relationship becomes a central focus in one’s life. Additionally, Andersen and Chen (2002) proposed that individuals create mental models for each one of their interpersonal relationships. Andersen and Chen further argued that these models influence perceptions of new people the individual encounters in their daily life. Although not directly focusing on relationship awareness, Aron et al. (1991, 1992) argued that individuals incorporate their partner’s resources, identities, and perspectives of significant others with their own. Aron et al. also argued this inclusion of the other in the self (IOS) is a pluralistic representation of the relationship. This pluralistic representation is a mental model that fosters interdependence and increases feelings of closeness (Aron et al., 1992). Moreover, recent research by Tomlinson and Aron (2013), provided evidence that individuals not only create mental models of the relationship, but they also create mental models of their perceptions of IOS from their partners. Specifically, Tomlinson and Aron found that partner’s perceived closeness or perceived IOS mediated the relationship between one’s relationship satisfaction and their own closeness to their partner. These findings are consistent with theoretical arguments that awareness is a mental representation or mental model (Graziano, 2013). These results are also consistent with many theoretical arguments that conscious thought is associated with perspective taking of others (Baumeister & Masicampo, 2010) and the creation of cognitive models of other people’s awareness (Graziano & Kastner, 2011).

Further evidence of relationship awareness comes from the literature on communal relationships (Clark & Mills, 1979). Clark and Mills (2012) argued that many
non-intimate relationships are exchange relationships. Clark and Mills argued that in an exchange relationship one gives a benefit in exchange for a benefit in the present or the future (i.e., Blau, 1964; Homans, 1958). On the other hand, according to Clark and Mills, most intimate relationships are communal relationships, in which individuals seek to anticipate and provide for their partner’s needs without receiving any benefit in return. The idea that individuals in relationships are motivated to anticipate and provide for their partner’s needs suggests that individuals engage in perspective taking of their significant other. For example, Lemay, Clark, and Feeney (2007) conducted three studies in which they tested a projection model of relationship responsiveness. The researchers found that perceived responsiveness by their partner was associated with relationship satisfaction. These results, like those of Tomlinson and Aron (2013), provide support to the argument that individuals engage in perspective taking, which is again consistent with other theoretical views on relationship awareness.

Despite the research on relationship awareness, there has not been a universally accepted definition of relationship awareness. One reason is that awareness is difficult to define and operationalize. To deal with this limitation, I offer the following operational definition of relationship awareness. For the purposes of this dissertation, I will use the definition of awareness provided by Graziano and Kastner (2011), who defined awareness as information in the form of an internal model of experiences based upon internally stored information, which can be verbally reported. This mental representation acts not so much as an exact duplicate of the real thing, but a more concise version of the original. Thus, awareness is set of information or knowledge, which is the result of introspectively scanned and summarized information (Graziano, 2013, p. 28).
In other words, this summary of the information we call awareness is a new set of information derived from existing information (Baumeister & Masicampo, 2010). I argue that relationship awareness is a cognitive state in which one is consciously aware or has explicit knowledge of the status of their current relationship. Relationship awareness is not only knowledge about one’s relationship; it is also the cognitive representation of the experience of that relationship, which can be reported by one or both of the partners in the relationship. One example of relationship awareness is the previously mentioned concept of a pluralistic representation of the relationship as described by Agnew et al. (1998) and Aron et al. (1991). This pluralistic representation represents an awareness of the relationship. More specifically Agnew et al. (1998) argued that this pluralistic representation represents the awareness of both partners’ interdependence on the other and demonstrates one’s perceived closeness and interdependence within a relationship. People derive their experience of awareness from available sources of information and summarize that information in the form of a pluralistic representation.

Additionally, awareness is a part of conscious thought (Graziano, 2013). Although there are many functions of conscious thought (see Baumeister & Masicampo, 2010 for a review), this discussion of relational awareness will focus on two specific functions of conscious thought as it pertains to relational awareness: updating information (Donald, 2001; Graziano, 2013; Graziano & Kastner, 2011) and information integration for the purpose of generating new knowledge (Baumeister & Masicampo, 2010; Donald, 2001). Relationship awareness allows individuals to review one’s current knowledge and stored information, and continuously update that information.
Relationship awareness is also a specific type of conscious thought process. Individuals integrate incoming information and activate requisite knowledge stores of information to coordinate appropriate behavioral responses (Baars, 1988). However, these knowledge stores must be continually updated as new information becomes available.

An analogy that might be helpful is to think of a software program update. In this example, the computer reviews the stored information (current software program) and then updates the existing knowledge as necessary to improve the functioning of the software (software update). Metaphorically speaking, the computer integrates the old and new information and activates appropriate parts of the program (knowledge stores) to carry out the purpose of the program. In a similar sense, relationship awareness is a process of integrating incoming information about one’s relationship, one’s partner, or even his or her perspectives on the relationship. This purpose of integrating information is to update or enhance one’s awareness of the current relationship status. This new awareness is then used to coordinate future behaviors (Baumeister & Masicampo, 2011).

During the early relationship development, individuals process all of the available information, and if it is determined that the individual is indeed in a relationship, the individual may experience an “aha” moment. When the individual experiences this "aha" moment, he or she then makes a conscious judgment that they are in a real relationship (updated awareness). This “aha” moment is perceived as a mental representation of the romantic relationship with their new partner. It is in this instance that individuals first “legitimize” their relationships.

In summary, research has found that one feature of relationship awareness is that couples can report on the state of their relationship through relationship talk. Relationship
partners cannot only learn about the relationship through relationship talk, but they can also report on the nature of the relationship if asked. Relationship awareness also has an impact on relational well-being (Acitelli, 1992). Acitelli specifically found that increased relational talk from men positively affected women’s’ relational well-being. Additionally, research has provided evidence in support of a pluralistic representation of the relationship (Agnew et al., 1998; Aron et al., 1991, 1992; Tomlinson & Aron, 2013).

Relationship research however, has not focused on the information sources used to create an awareness of the current state of the relationship. More specifically, research has not examined how individuals become aware that they have entered into a relationship. The understanding of relationship awareness is important because relationships represent one of the central facets of our lives (Agnew et al., 1998). Given the relative importance of relationships, individuals must be able to determine if they are in a relationship. Furthermore, there are high opportunity costs associated with mate selection and wasting time on a mate that is not interested can be quite costly (Buss & Schmitt, 1993; Gangestad & Simpson, 2000). Understanding the information sources one relies upon to become aware, as well as how each of these sources impact relationship awareness, may provide us with a better understanding of the process of early relationship development.

Additionally, understanding the influence of the various information sources used in the early phases may help scientists better understand how people synthesize this information to become aware of their relationships. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to examine how the various information sources influence relationship awareness during the early phase of relationship development.
Research on Early Relationship Development

Attraction. Attraction research became prominent in the 1960’s (Perlman, 2008), but waned during the 1980’s as relationship research focused on established relationships. However, research on attraction has recently resurfaced because of new theoretical perspectives (Finkel & Eastwick, 2012), the increased interest in evolutionary psychology (e.g. Asendorpf, Penke, & Back, 2011; Back, Penke, Schmukle, Sachse, Borkenau, & Asendorpf, 2011; Fletcher, Kerr, Li, & Valentine, 2014; Tidwell, Eastwick & Finkel, 2013), and the advent of new strategies such as Internet dating and speed dating (Eastwick & Finkel, 2008; Mckenna, 2008; Sprecher, Schwarz, Harvey, & Hatfield, 2008). Much of the research on early relationship development has examined interpersonal attraction. Attraction research has typically focused on a number of areas such as attitude similarity, physical attractiveness, behaviors, and gender differences in attraction. Much of the attraction research has focused on similarity and physical attraction.

Many of the early attraction studies focused on attitude similarity in regards to shared values and beliefs (i.e., Byrne, 1971). In fact, a wide variety of studies have demonstrated that people are attracted to those who have similar attitudes (for a review, see Graziano & Bruce, 2008). Similarity has also been shown to predict other relational outcomes as well. Some of these relational outcomes include satisfaction (Acitelli, Kenny, & Weiner, 2000; Gonzaga, Campos, & Bradbury, 2007), commitment (Weigel, 2010), and attachment to a hypothetical partner (Chappell & Davis, 1998; Holmes & Johnson, 2009; Latty-Mann & Davis, 1996; Pietromonaco & Carnelley, 1994).
While the similarity effect has generally been supported, there has been some disagreement as to whether actual similarity or perceived similarity in domains such as attitudes, physical attraction, and personality traits matter in predicting interpersonal attraction (Montoya, Horton, & Kirchner, 2008). Generally speaking, laboratory research on similarity has supported that the assertion that actual similarity increases attraction (Graziano & Bruce, 2008; Montoya et al., 2008). In fact, a meta-analysis conducted by Montoya et al. (2008) found support for the link between actual similarity and attraction in laboratory studies with a large effect size ($r = .59$). However, this association decreased significantly after a short amount of interaction. Moreover, Montoya et al. did not find any support for an effect of actual similarity between partners in existing relationships. On the other hand, Montoya et al. found support for perceived similarity in laboratory studies as well as field studies. These findings suggest that perceived similarity between two relationship partners may be more predictive of attraction than actual similarity.

In addressing the differences in findings between laboratory studies and field studies on the similarity effect, Montoya et al. (2008) speculated there might be many factors that drown out the similarity effect in field studies. Montoya suggested that factors such as environmental cues (Byrne, 1992), lack of appropriate research methods for field research, information salience, and desensitization might be responsible for the differences in results. Overall, the current evidence suggests that perceived similarity is more likely to lead to attraction.

Research on physical attraction has also been around since the late 1960’s. Perhaps the most famous of the early studies on physical attraction is the dance study by
Walster, Aronson, Abrahams, and Rottman (1966). The researchers conducted a field experiment, where participants bought tickets to a dance. The researchers used a computer to randomly assign participants who bought tickets to the dance to a partner of the opposite sex. During the dance, researchers asked male participants to rate their partner’s attractiveness. Additionally participants provided information about themselves on a wide variety of factors including popularity, self-esteem, and personality factors. The results of the study indicated that physical attraction was the only predictor of male’s liking for his partner.

Furthermore, research on facial attractiveness indicates that people generally prefer faces of average attractiveness compared to those whose attractiveness is too high or too low (Langlois & Roggman, 1990). Research has also found evidence of physical attraction in other domains such as women’s facial characteristics (Cunningham, 1986; Cunningham, Barbee, & Pike, 1990), smell (Rikowski & Grammer, 1999; Foster, 2008), height and weight (Weeden & Sabini, 2005; Richmond Austin, Walls, & Subramanian, 2012), and hip to waist ratios (Tassinary & Hansen, 1998; Koscinski, 2014). The research in these areas has demonstrated that people have preferences in the physical attractiveness of their mates on several dimensions. Overall, the evidence provided by the literature demonstrates a number of factors that influence perceptions of physical attractiveness.

Despite all of the knowledge generated about attraction, human mating is much more complex than simply finding an attractive mate who is physically attractive, and has similar beliefs and attitudes. Attraction is the first step in the early stages of relationships and there is much of the process of early relationship development that occurs beyond
initial attraction. In fact, much of early relationship development is associated with
getting to know one’s partner and determining if they want a relationship with the other
person (Altman & Taylor, 1973; Baxter & Bullis, 1986; Burger & Calabrese, 1975;

While attraction research helps researchers understand what initially draws people
together, it does not adequately explain how people identify compatible mates who are
interested in pursuing a relationship. For instance, if a man or woman identifies an
attractive person standing across the room that does not mean that the attractive other will
return his or her feelings. Furthermore, we meet people who are similar to us in some
aspect almost daily, yet we do not form romantic relationships with most of them.
Additionally, even if there is mutual attraction, the current theories of attraction are not
suited to tell us much about how people become aware of their relationships. This
dissertation will begin to address this gap. The next section will discuss several theories
associated with early relationship development.

**Theories of early relationship development.** The study of relationship
development began in the 1940’s (Ogolsky et al., 2013), and early studies of relationship
development were largely atheoretical. Early studies primarily focused on relationship
development models that focused on compatibility, similarity, and complementarity
(Ogolsky et al., 2013). Over the course of time, as researchers conducted more and more
studies, scholars began to develop theories to explain relationship development. There are
five main theories or models of relationship development: stage theories, penetration
theory, evolutionary theory, attachment theory, and cultural script frameworks. I have
organized these theories into two sections: early theories and contemporary theories. The
early theories section covers stage theories and social penetration theory while the contemporary theories section covers evolutionary theory, attachment theory, and cultural scripts.

**Early theories.** During the 1960’s – 1980’s, researchers began to conceptualize relationship development in a more parsimonious manner. In this vein, stage theories became quite popular, as they offered a linear explanation of relationship development (Guerrero & Mongeau, 2008). There are many stage theories, such as filtering theories (Duck, 1973; Duck & Craig, 1977; Kerckhoff & Davis, 1962), relationship stage theory (Levinger, 1983), Knapp’s relational stage model (Knapp, 1978), and social penetration theory (Altman & Taylor, 1973).

Filtering theories state that individuals seek out relationships through a filtering process. As people encounter others in the social world, they filter people through various stages of interaction. At each stage, people gather information in the form of cues to determine if the individual should be filtered out or if the relationship should grow closer. Duck and Craig (1977) argued that individuals who make it through all of the filters would become intimate partners with the person who is doing the filtering. Kerckhoff and Davis (1962) compared perceptions of complementarity to value consensus between couples in predicting long-term commitment. The researchers found that value consensus was only related to newly formed couples, where complementarity was only related to more established couples. Kerckhoff and Davis reasoned that the differences in the results could be explained by suggesting that couples use “filters” during mate-selection to filter out undesirable mates. This concept became known as filtering theory.
Duck extended this idea, with his predictive filter model (Duck, 1973; Duck & Craig, 1977). Duck argued that similarity among various cognitive aspects such as attitudes and beliefs are rewarding. Duck further argued that as relationship partners increase their level of intimacy, they pass through a series of filters in the form of social comparisons. These social comparisons contrast their partner with their ideal, thus validating the individual’s cognition about the relationship. Furthermore, Duck argued that each comparison acts as a filter. When the individual's cognition is not validated, the relationship is then “filtered out”. Duck’s predictive filter model is similar to the contemporary concept of ideal standards (Fletcher, Simpson, & Thomas, 2000), which suggests that individuals have a set of standards about their relationship and their partner. Individuals use these ideal standards to make social comparisons of their partner or relationship with their ideals.

Levinger’s (1983) relationship stage theory states that relationships go through a series of stages. In the first stage people become acquaintances with another person. According to the theory, all relationship types experience this stage (Levinger, 1983). Next, the relationship enters into a buildup stage where intimacy, defined as an upsurge in interdependence, increases in the relationship. Once the relationship is established, it then goes into a continuation or consolidation stages. Subsequently, some relationships may go into deterioration or decline. In this instance, the relationship dissolves either voluntarily or non-voluntarily. In summary, couples move through each of the first three stages as intimacy increases. Some couples stay in the third stage (maintenance) while others begin to experience a decline, which may ultimately end up in dissolution.
Knapp’s (1978) stage model also describes how relationships are initiated, escalated, and stabilize over time, as well as how relationships dissolve. Knapp’s model states that relationships develop across five stages: initiating, experimenting, intensifying, integrating, and bonding. Each stage is unique and describes different stages of relationship development. Knapp theorizes that people progress through stages in succession, as skipping a step results in missing information, which may have negative relational outcomes (Knapp & Vangelisti, 2005).

Lastly, social penetration theory (Altman & Taylor, 1973) states that relationships develop as interpersonal communication between relationship partners grows from shallow communication to deeper, more meaningful communication. According to the theory, self-disclosure over time leads to increases in breadth (number of topic areas) and depth (level of intimacy) of those disclosures (Derlega et al., 2008). As intimacy increases in a relationship, partners begin to reveal more and more information about themselves to each other. Increases or decreases in self-disclosure are based upon subjective outcome assessments (rewards vs. costs) of previous interactions. In other words, increases in self-disclosure lead to greater disclosure of intimate information between romantic partners (Derlega et al., 2008).

In summary, early relationship development theories focused primarily on attraction and much of the early theorization relied upon stage theories, which provided parsimony. Despite the parsimony of each of the theories mentioned above, the stage theories (e.g., filtering theories, relationship stage theory, relational stage model, & social penetration theory) suffered from a lack of empirical support. The lack of support for stage theories appears to stem from the assumption that stages must occur in succession,
as one must gain the requisite experience from one stage to move on to the next (e.g. Duck, 1973; Duck & Craig, 1977; Vangelisti & Knapp, 2005). However, relationship trajectories are often non-linear (Weigel & Murray, 2000). Despite the weaknesses of stage theories, research has shown a great deal of support for the influence of similarity on attraction in relationships (Byrne, 1971; Luo & Zhang, 2009; Tidwell et al., 2013) and self-disclosure in relationships (Altman & Taylor, 1973; Berger & Calabrese, 1975; Fox et al., 2013; Sprecher, 2014).

Contemporary theories. Contemporary theories of relationship development have primarily focused on mate selection processes. The two primary theoretical perspectives are evolutionary theory and attachment theory. Another contemporary approach to relationship development has been examining the role of cultural scripts in understanding couples’ stories they create about how they came together. This section will discuss these theoretical perspectives in detail.

Evolutionary theory states that people select mates based upon preferences that have been adapted to increase reproductive fitness and promote the survival of the species (Buss & Schmidt, 1993). Thus, evolutionary theory states that humans have adapted specific mate preferences that increase the likelihood of finding a high-quality mate. Additionally, Buss and Schmidt (1993) proposed sexual strategies theory, which states that individuals engage in long and short-term mating strategies to solve different adaptive problems (Buss & Schmidt, 1993). Short-term strategies promote increased sexual access to a variety of mates. Men are thought to be more likely to engage in short-term mating strategies since they invest minimal effort in raising offspring compared to females (Trivers, 1972). Additionally, resource extraction, which is theorized to be a
primary motivation for women who are seeking mates, is thought to be extremely difficult in short-term mating strategies. Conversely, long-term mating strategies reduce the variety of potential sexual partners, but increases paternity certainty, sexual access with a long-term mate, the likelihood of resource extraction, and the likelihood of finding a mate who will commit to a long term relationship.

In a similar vein, attachment theory states that humans have adapted evolutionary mechanisms, which motivate attachment to others (Hazan & Shaver, 1987). According to attachment theory, attachment operates on two dimensions: anxiety and avoidance. The anxiety and avoidance dimensions are used to identify four attachment styles: Secure, anxious, avoidant, and dismissive (Barthalomew & Horowitz, 1991; Fraley & Shaver, 2000). Consequentially, one’s attachment style is determined by where she/he fit on the anxiety and avoidance dimensions. Although humans have mechanisms that motivate attachment, one’s attachment style is derived from personal characteristics, observed relationships (i.e. parental relationships, peer relationships, etc.), and one’s own relationship history (Mikulincer, & Shaver, 2013).

Research on attachment theory has traditionally found that individuals seek out relationships with those who have similar attachment styles. However, recent research has challenged this assumption. A recent meta-analysis by Holmes and Johnson (2009) found that all participants primarily preferred a partner with a secure attachment style, regardless of the participant’s actual attachment style. Additionally, Holmes and Johnson found support for preferences in attachment-style similarity in hypothetical mate selection paradigms. However, studies that examined mate preferences in actual
relationships found that when secure partners were unavailable individuals preferred a complimentary attachment style compared to their own.

Lastly, research on cultural scripts has demonstrated that individuals utilize relationship and partner ideals (Fletcher, Simpson, & Thomas, 2000), as well as expectations and scripts on relationship behaviors and events (Baxter & Bullis, 1986; Holmberg & MacKenzie, 2002; Taylor et al., 2013). Relationship scripts act as a subset of schemas (Baldwin, 1992) and contain relationship-specific information. Early relationship scripts provide information about the perceived appropriateness of the timing of events (Holmberg & Mackenzie, 2002), and appropriate pre-relationship behaviors (Laner & Ventrone, 2000; Taylor et al., 2013). This line of research has examined the influence of such scripts on relationship perceptions and behaviors. For example, Holmberg and Mackenzie (2002) found that greater matches between one’s scripts and normative scripts predicted higher relational well-being. Moreover, matches between self and partner’s scripts also predicted higher relational well-being.

In summary, research on relationship development has shifted toward the theoretical perspectives of evolution, attachment, and cultural scripts. Much of the research generated from the evolutionary and attachment perspectives provides evidence for the motivation to seek out quality mates (i.e. Buss & Schmitt, 1993) while cultural scripts provide people with information about their ideal relationships and how relationships should unfold. These ideals act as a means of comparing their own relationships with their own or cultural ideals (Baldwin, 1992; Campbell, Simpson, Kashy, & Fletcher, 2001; Eastwick, Finkel, & Eagly, 2011; Fletcher, et al., 2000; Ginsburg, 1988; Holmberg & Mackenzie, 2002).
While each of the theoretical models discussed in the early and contemporary theory sections have made important contributions to the relationship development literature, none have specifically addressed the process of relationship awareness during the early relationship development. This is important because conscious awareness has implications for future behaviors (Baumeister & Masicampo, 2010), including judgments and decisions. For a relationship to develop, people must first become aware that they are in a relationship. In the next section, I will discuss two underlying theories that I believe are more germane to the relationship awareness process.

**Review of the Underlying Theory**

Research has yet to examine the process by which individuals first become aware that they are in a romantic relationship. In order to begin filling this gap in the literature, this study proposed and tested a conceptual model designed to identify some of the key variables in the process. The model is based upon two conceptual frameworks: uncertainty management theory (UMT) and the theory of motivated information management (TMIM). Both UMT and TMIM were developed as a response to the limitations of uncertainty reduction theory (Berger & Calabrese, 1975). The discussion will now move to a brief introduction to uncertainty reduction theory, before describing UMT and TMIM in more detail. Afterward, the discussion will move to uncertainty during early relationship development, followed by information seeking during early relationship development.

**Uncertainty reduction theory.** The traditional model of uncertainty proposed by Berger and Calabrese (1975) posited that uncertainty is an anxiety provoking experience and that individuals engage in information-seeking processes to reduce anxiety associated
with uncertainty. Uncertainty reduction theory (URT) states that individuals in initial encounters with people they recently met are motivated to reduce uncertainty or increase the predictability of new relationships. Berger and Calabrese further argued that uncertainty reduction occurs through three phases of interaction. During the initial interaction partners progress through the first phase by first learning basic information about their partner (such as the person’s name, where they live, etc.) as well as their general attitudes. As the interaction continues, partners exchange information about personal attitudes and opinions on topics. Lastly, each partner decides if they desire a future interaction with the other. In other words, interaction partners engage in information seeking to reduce uncertainty. Furthermore, according to URT information seeking and providing information to others is a reciprocal process, which prevents a power imbalance due to one interaction partner having more information than the other does.

Berger and Calabrese (1975) also stated that people are motivated to reduce their uncertainty in order to reduce their anxiety about a lack of information or to increase predictability. Furthermore, according to URT, uncertainty is an aversive state that produces anxiety and provides the motivation for information seeking. Thus, URT states that uncertainty is positively associated with information seeking. Likewise, Berger and Calabrese argued that as people reduce their uncertainty, people’s need to seek out information also decreases.

Berger and Calabrese (1975) also argued that high levels of uncertainty decrease intimacy and reduce liking. Consequentially, URT states that uncertainty reduction leads to increased intimacy between partners. Contemporary research on uncertainty reduction
has found that uncertainty is strong during transitional periods in relationships (Knobloch & Solomon, 2002, 2005). Leanne Knobloch and Denise Solomon have found that uncertainty is greatest during times of transition (Knobloch, 2007; Knobloch & Solomon, 1999, 2002; 2005). Their work has demonstrated that uncertainty is a result of experiencing relationship transitions, and people reduce their uncertainty as they obtain more information. The reduction of uncertainty has been shown to help relationship partners transition from one relational phase to the next (Knobloch & Solomon, 1999, 2002; 2005).

Additionally, uncertainty is prevalent in computer-mediated communication (Stewart, Dainton, & Goodboy, 2014) on Internet sites such as Facebook. Stewart et al. (2014) conducted a survey of undergraduates who were actively using Facebook. The researchers hypothesized that relationship uncertainty should predict increases in the monitoring of partner’s Facebook activity. Consistent with URT, the study found that participants who experienced more uncertainty in their relationships were more likely to monitor their partner’s Facebook activity. In addition, uncertainty can also influence perceptions of potential dates in online dating. A recent study by Kotlyar and Ariely (2013) argued that the lack of non-verbal communication created uncertainty for daters on Internet dating sites. The researchers conducted an experiment comparing traditional online communication to the use of avatars to simulate varying degrees of face-to-face communication. The researchers found that use of active avatars that were capable of non-verbally communicating participant’s intentions were associated with more positive perceptions of the participant’s partner, increased disclosure, and had a higher interest in developing a relationship. These results are also consistent with URT, as increased
information via the use of an avatar reduced uncertainty about the other person’s intentions.

**Uncertainty management theory.** UMT (Brashers, 2001) was developed in response to certain limitations of URT (Berger & Calabrese, 1975). As mentioned previously, URT states that individuals are motivated to reduce uncertainty because uncertainty produces anxiety, which is alleviated by seeking information and reducing the level of uncertainty. Brashers (2001) contended that uncertainty might cause individuals to experience a wide array of emotions (including anxiety). UMT has three main assumptions: 1) individual experiences and meaning associated with uncertainty varies from person to person, 2) responses to uncertainty are shaped by emotional reactions and appraisals, and 3) individuals engage in a variety of behaviors in their response to uncertainty including information seeking, information avoidance, or eliciting information from others.

One of the reasons UMT has been so influential is that in this theoretical model uncertainty and information seeking operate independently. According to Brashers (2001), one may have a lot of information, yet still perceive a high level of uncertainty, or have very little information yet feel quite certain about a situation. Brashers’ assertion that uncertainty is independent of information seeking is in direct contrast with Axiom 3 of URT, which states that uncertainty and information seeking are positively correlated (Berger & Calabrese, 1975, p.103). Additionally, Brashers makes the assumption that individuals may not only be motivated to reduce their level of uncertainty, but that sometimes people might be comfortable with their current level of uncertainty, or they may even desire to increase it. Lastly, according to the UMT perspective, uncertainty
management is both a conscious and unconscious process. However, Brashers only makes inferences about the role of conscious processes in uncertainty management. Brashers proposes that uncertainty management is dependent upon one’s orientation toward uncertainty, as certainty-oriented individuals are more likely to rely on heuristic processing while uncertainty oriented people increase conscious processing and decrease heuristic processing (Brashers, 2001; Sorrentino, Holmes, Hanna, & Sharp, 1995).

**Theory of motivated information management.** TMIM is closely related to UMT; in fact, Afifi borrowed heavily from UMT when developing TMIM (Afifi & Matsunaga, 2008, p. 127). Additionally, like UMT, TMIM also states that individuals may be perfectly fine with the level of uncertainty they have, they may want to reduce their uncertainty, or they may want to increase their uncertainty in certain cases. Also, TMIM states that individuals only seek out information when they are motivated to do so.

Afifi and Weiner (2004) proposed three stages of information seeking: 1) the interpretation phase, 2) the evaluation phase, and 3) the decision phase. In the interpretation phase, individuals perceive uncertainty about a certain topic and compare the current level of uncertainty that they have with their desired level of uncertainty (Afifi & Weiner, 2004). TMIM maintains that the discrepancy between one’s current level of uncertainty and their desired level produces emotional responses, which influences how individuals manage their uncertainty. These emotional responses may motivate people to increase or decrease their current level of uncertainty. In addition, if there is no mismatch between one’s level of uncertainty and their desired level of uncertainty, then there is no dilemma and nothing happens. According to TMIM, the mismatch between one’s current level of uncertainty and one’s desired level causes the individual to become consciously
aware of their uncertainty. In the evaluation phase, individuals evaluate the expected outcomes of their information search, and their ability to reduce the anxiety by engaging in the information search. Lastly, there is the decision phase where individuals decide on the appropriate course of action in terms of dealing with the discrepancy. According to TMIM, individuals decide on how to deal with the uncertainty discrepancy by using one of three general strategies: 1) seek relevant information, 2) avoid relevant information, and 3) engage in cognitive reappraisal.

In conclusion, this section discussed three theories of uncertainty and information seeking. URT states that uncertainty is anxiety provoking and that individuals are motivated to engage in information seeking to reduce anxiety. Many researchers have taken issue with the idea that uncertainty is necessarily anxiety provoking and have cited evidence countering this idea (i.e. Brashers, 2001; Sunnafrank, 1988, 1990). Conversely, UMT states that uncertainty can produce a wide array of emotional responses, which in turn motivate a wide array of responses to uncertainty. Lastly, TMIM states that individuals engage in information seeking when one’s current level of uncertainty is greater than what they desire. The next section will compare and contrast these two perspectives, and then discuss which model(s) fit best with the proposed model of relationship awareness proposed in the dissertation project.

**Comparing and Contrasting UMT and TMIM**

UMT and TMIM both contend that anxiety is only one possible outcome of uncertainty. Moreover, both UMT and TMIM suggest that uncertainty can produce a wide range of emotional outcomes and that uncertainty may be beneficial to individuals in certain cases. For instance, Brashers (2001) maintained that uncertainty might be
beneficial in coping with chronic uncertainty, such as dealing with chronic illness. In a similar vein, Afifi and Weiner (2004) asserted that when people are satisfied with their current level of uncertainty they would often disengage from information seeking. For example, a study by Murray, Holmes, and Collins (2006) argued that those who are sensitive to threats of rejection are more likely to engage in self-protective behaviors to avoid rejection cues. The avoidance of rejection cues demonstrates one’s desire to maintain their current level of uncertainty by disengaging from information seeking.

Additionally, both perspectives stress the importance of uncertainty management. In other words, both theories suggest that people may be motivated to reduce or maintain, or even increase their current level of uncertainty.

Of course, there are differences between the two theories. For instance, each of these perspectives has a different explanatory focus. For instance, UMT’s primary focus is on the relationship between uncertainty and information seeking. Additionally, UMT also vaguely discusses the role of emotion in uncertainty management while TMIM originally did not mention the role of emotion at all. However, recently Afifi and Morse (2009) included appraisals as part of the evaluation phase of TMIM, although the discussion is limited. Afifi and Morse (2009) propose that appraisals operate in a manner similar to UMT.

Regarding uncertainty management processes, Brashers does provide a compelling argument; however UMT provides almost no information about the process of reducing or increasing uncertainty, or about information seeking strategies (Afifi & Matsunaga, 2008). On the other hand, the primary strength of TMIM is that it almost exclusively discusses the process of information seeking. However, while the theory does
discuss the possibility of increasing uncertainty it does not provide any explanation about
the process, or strategies one might use to do so. Additionally, Afifi and Weiner (2004)
do not discuss the role of processing strategies in information management.

As mentioned previously, the strength of UMT is its perspective that people do
not simply reduce uncertainty, they manage it instead. UMT makes the explicit case that
uncertainty management and information seeking operate independently and serve two
different purposes. Additionally, the theory accounts for the role of emotion in the form
of appraisals and the possibility of multiple strategies with which one can manage
uncertainty. However, the lack of a specified process in the UMT perspective provides a
challenge that is remedied by bringing in TMIM.

A major strength of using both UMT and TMIM is that they are compatible and
share many of the same assumptions. TMIM specifically addresses the issue of defining a
process that describes when and how people reduce uncertainty if they are so motivated
(Afifi & Weiner, 2004). Specifically, TMIM specifies the conditions under which an
individual is likely to be motivated to reduce uncertainty and provides hypotheses that are
relevant to UMT and TMIM, as well as relationship awareness. Additionally, both UMT
and TMIM provide uncertainty management strategies such as reliance on social
networks (Brashers, 2001), general information seeking strategies (Afifi & Weiner,
2004), and affective appraisals (Afifi & Morse, 2009; Brashers, 2001). These will be
most helpful in generating hypotheses and selecting measures for the dissertation.

In summary, UMT and TMIM provide explanations about dealing with
uncertainty. These perspectives agree on many points, particularly that individuals are not
always motivated to reduce uncertainty, and in certain cases they may even wish to
increase it. Each of these perspectives has limitations in their ability to explain uncertainty and information seeking during early relationship development. These perspectives complement each other nicely; the strengths of one theory make up for the limitation of the other. Furthermore, UMT and TMIM provide theoretical guidance that provides testable hypotheses that are relevant to the relationship awareness concept.

**Uncertainty During Early Relationship Development**

Early relationship development can be fraught with uncertainty (Berger & Calabrese, 1975; Knobloch & Miller, 2008; Sunnafrank, 1990). People who are entering a relationship may be uncertain about a wide range of factors and may wonder: Is this person right for me? Is this person also interested in me as well? Do we have similar relationship goals? These types of questions may cause a wide variety of emotions such as anxiety, anger, sadness, frustration, happiness, excitement, etc. (Brashers, 2001).

How individuals deal with uncertainty is dependent upon their motivation to resolve uncertainty (Afifi & Weiner, 2004; Brashers, 2001). Recent research has suggested that uncertainty is a motivating factor at the earliest stages of attraction to a potential relationship partner (Whitchurch, Wilson, & Gilbert, 2011) and that individuals have a wide variety of motives for reducing uncertainty in romantic contexts (Berger & Calabrese, 1975; Brashers, 2001, Sunnafrank 1988, Theiss & Solomon, 2008). Uncertainty can also produce a wide variety of emotional reactions (Brashers, 2001).

**Information Seeking During Early Relationship Development**

To be skilled at successfully identifying that one is in an actual relationship, one must be able to successfully utilize the information sources at one’s disposal. Assuming one is motivated to reduce uncertainty to identify a new relationship, one must seek out
information to determine the status of the potential relationship (Afifi & Weiner, 2004).

A review of the relationship literature identifies four sources of information that individuals rely on in making judgments and decisions about their relationships. These information sources are cognition (Agnew, et. al., 1998; Aron, et al., 1991; Baldwin, 1992; Fletcher, et al., 2000), emotions (Birnie-Porter & Lydon, 2013; Fraley & Shaver, 2000; Gonzaga, et al., 2007; Winterheld & Simpson, 2011), social networks (Agnew, et al., 2001; Etcheverry & Agnew, 2004; Loving, 2006; Sprecher, 2011; Sprecher & Felmlee, 2000), and relational behaviors (Dindia, 1994; Reis & Clark, 2013; Weigel, 2008; Weigel & Ballard-Reisch, 2002).

While there is sufficient evidence that people use the information sources listed above, current research has not yet examined how information seeking influences conscious awareness during the early stages of relationship development. One of the roles of conscious thought is to seek out all available information and integrate the information to resolve conflicts among various information sources (Baumeister & Masicampo, 2010). In other words, the primary function of information seeking and integration is to resolve uncertainty among a variety of alternatives (Edelman, 1989; Edelman & Tononi, 2000). This previous statement has implications for early relationship development and suggests that individuals integrate information about their potential relationships and make determinations about their relationships based upon the integrated information obtained as a function of conscious thought. Additionally, once people make a determination about the status of their relationships they must become consciously aware of this new determination and experience an “aha” moment, where the individual realizes they are now in an actual relationship. Research has yet to examine the connection
between information seeking in regards to uncertainty management and conscious awareness in early relationship development.

**Results from a Preliminary Study**

Before presenting my conceptual model of relationship awareness, I outline the results from a preliminary study I conducted on relationship awareness. This section serves two purposes. First, this section provides some preliminary findings on information seeking and relationship awareness in relationships. Second, the results in this study are relevant to many elements of the dissertation, and I will refer to this study throughout the rest of the dissertation.

In the preliminary study, Dan Weigel and I conducted focus groups of undergraduate and graduate students (Davis & Weigel, 2013) to begin describing the layperson’s perceptive of how people use the information sources reported in the literature (cognition, emotion, social, and behavioral), and how they become aware of their relationships. A total of 30 participants took part in the focus groups. The focus group participants were primarily female (73%), and ages ranged from 18 – 39 with a median age of 23.63 years. The majority of participants were dating one person exclusively (64%), 13% were married, 10% were divorced, 7% were not dating anyone exclusively, 3% were engaged, and 3% were cohabitating with their partner. A total of four focus groups were conducted. The first focus group was a mixed gender group, the second was all female, the third was comprised of all males, and the fourth was comprised of a mixed group of student counselors from the Downing Clinic located in the College of Education at the University of Nevada, Reno. The four focus groups were designed to obtain the most diverse perspectives possible. I used convenience sampling to
recruit participants for the four focus groups. The first three focus groups were recruited through the Social Psychology subject pool, and participants for the fourth focus group were counseling interns recruited through the Downing Clinic. I facilitated the focus groups and notes were taken during the focus group session by a note taker, and the sessions were recorded with participants’ knowledge and consent.

In the study, many participants indicated that they felt uncertainty during the early stages of their relationships. One female participant indicated that she had liked her current boyfriend, but he did not seem to notice. When he finally showed interest, she indicated that she was “excited” because “I had been waiting for a long time!” Another female participant indicated that she still has some uncertainty in her relationship; she indicated that she still asks herself “Do I deserve this?” One of the male participants indicated that he felt “fear and relief”; he indicated that felt fear “because you’re letting yourself become vulnerable, and relief because… going from kinda a more isolated state to having somebody that you might be able to rely on is significant.” Another male participant said, “She mentioned half-jokingly saying I was her boyfriend. She was putting it out there. I had to decide if that’s what I want.”

Additionally, participants indicated that they engaged in information seeking in the beginning stages of their relationships. For example, when asked how they knew they were in a relationship, male and female participants indicated that they noticed that they were spending more time with their partners. One female participant said, “We started spending more time alone.” Similarly, a male participant said that we were together and not getting tired of each other at all.” In addition, many participants indicated that their social networks provided feedback indicating that they might be in a relationship. For
example, one male participant stated, “Friends started asking lots of questions. I started to think about it, and I realized I was [in a relationship].” Similarly, a female participant indicated that her mother told her “You know you guys would have really beautiful kids.”

In reference to the information sources they used, participants were asked to discuss when they became aware that they had entered into an actual relationship. Participants indicated that they relied on cognitive, emotional, social, and behavioral information. Participants reported that they have relationship ideals and that those ideals were developed from past relationships, observing other relationships, and media influences. Moreover, participants reported that when it came to comparing their partner to their ideal, they adjusted their ideal to fit their partner. One female participant stated, “We make our relationship fit our ideal,” this sentiment was expressed in all four focus groups. Additionally, participants reported that they experienced emotions such as happiness, joy, excitement, and fear at the prospect of a new relationship.

Participants also stated that friends and family were highly influential in reinforcing the idea that they and their partner were in a relationship. Participants stated that friends and family used social approval or disapproval in order to influence the relationship. For example, one female participant said, “my boyfriend's dad gave him a high five.” Participants also reported that perceptions of behavior (self and partner) influenced their awareness of being in a relationship. Participants described two types of behaviors that provided information about the validity of their relationships: commitment behaviors, indicating a commitment to the relationship, and affectionate behaviors, which communicate feelings of closeness.
Lastly, participants generally reported that they came to a “realization” (i.e., the “aha” moment) that their partner was a long-term match. When asked what did it feel like when you became aware that you are now in a relationship, one male participant said “A realization. It hit me that we were in a relationship.” Additionally, many participants felt that they were in a relationship before formally making it official. Also, these participants all suggested that there was some formal verbal agreement that occurred after the “aha” moment that indicated that they were now “officially” a couple.

**Proposed Model of Relationship Awareness**

The proposed conceptual model of relationship awareness in Figure 1 provides the basis for this dissertation. The conceptual model is divided into four phases: 1) catalyst phase, 2) information-seeking phase, 3) relational awareness phase, and 4) behavioral phase. For clarity purposes, the catalyst phase, the information-seeking phase, and the relationship awareness phase will be discussed upfront as they provide relevant underlying assumptions, and are the subject of investigation, and the discussion of phase four will occur in Chapter 5, as it is not the focus of this dissertation.

**Figure 1.** The four proposed phases of relationship awareness.
Before the relationship awareness process, individuals unconsciously scan the environment for cues that direct one’s attention to attractive partners. Mating preferences provide the cues that direct attention to a potential partner. These cues can be physical (Buss & Schmitt, 1993), social (i.e. status; Li et al., 2013), proximity (Fehr, 2008), and similarity (Byrne, 1971, Luo & Zhang, 2009; Tidwell et al., 2013) to name a few. Individuals collect cues from the environment such as people who match partner ideals (at least on a superficial level), emotions or feelings, behaviors from others, and their social networks, which is then processed. The accumulated cues become conscious in the mind as the information from the cues is integrated, and conflicting information is resolved so that the person can then act on the information (Baumeister & Masicampo, 2010). Once the cues are conscious, individuals experience this phenomenon as an attraction. Attraction acts as a catalyst for individuals to engage in the relationship awareness process.

Catalyst Phase

During the catalyst phase, individuals encounter something in their environments such as an eliciting trigger, an emotion, or a feeling. The eliciting trigger is then moderated by the person’s relationship goals, which in turn leads to an uncertainty appraisal of the eliciting trigger. The resulting appraisal results in activation or suppression of information seeking processes. Although the dissertation will examine some aspects of the catalyst phase, this phase contains additional underlying assumptions that are relevant to the proposed model. The remainder of this section describes the catalyst phase in detail and addresses the role of eliciting triggers, relationship goals, and uncertainty appraisal during the catalyst phase.
**Eliciting triggers.** Eliciting triggers are goal-relevant events that lead to an appraisal (Moors, 2013; Roseman, 2013). Examples of eliciting triggers in early relationship development include not being able to stop thinking about the other person, emotions such as excitement, fear, or happiness (Theiss & Solomon, 2008), spending more time together (Weigel, 2008), or the partner’s family including the individual in family events (Davis & Weigel, 2013). Each of these events can act as turning points in the development of the relationship (Baxter & Bullis, 1986). Individuals detect eliciting triggers by monitoring goal-relevant information from the environment, as well as goal-relevant information they already have. Once this information input is found, it is then processed and the individual produces an uncertainty appraisal of the situation.

**Relationship goals.** Goals represent a person’s desired outcome (Tamir, 2009). The need to form meaningful relationships with others and maintain the relationships we have is the central focus of most people (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Thus, many people share a common goal of entering into a meaningful romantic relationship. This goal is so prevalent that humans regulate the balance between relationship promoting goals and the need to avoid rejection (Murray et al., 2006). Furthermore, individuals seeking a long-term relationship must seek out potential partners with the same goal. Thus, individuals with goals of entering a long-term relationship monitor the environment to find potential partners who might satisfy this goal. Relationship goals are both individual and dyadic. Additionally, relationship partners influence each other’s goals and over time, each partner’s relational goals should become closer together.

Furthermore, individuals balance many relationship goals simultaneously. Among those goals are hedonic goals (Tamir, 2009), approach and avoidance goals (Fraley &
Shaver, 2000; Gable, 2006), self-verification goals, (Swann, 1983; Swan & Burhmester, 2012), and security and growth goals (Higgins, 1997; Winterheld & Simpson, 2011). Moreover, goals provide the motivation for uncertainty appraisals (Brasher, 2001), information seeking (Afifi & Weiner, 2004), and behavior (Gollwitzer, 1999; Gollwitzer & Sheeran, 2006). In fact, emotional feedback or emotion-based information is also motivated by goals, as emotional experiences provide goal-relevant information, which directly influences future thoughts and indirectly influences behavior (Baumeister, Vohs, DeWall, & Zhang, 2007).

Much of the work on relationship goals has focused on approach and avoidance goals. Gable (2006) proposed a model of approach and avoidance in relationships. According to Gable and Impett (2012), individuals with approach goals are motivated by the pursuit of positive outcomes, while avoidance goals are associated with avoiding negative outcomes. For example, Murray et al. (2006) argued that people who feel less positively regarded by their partner will activate self-protective or avoidance goals. Conversely, people who feel more positively regarded by their partners will activate relationship promoting goals or approach goals. Additionally, Impett, Gordon, Kogan, Oveis, Gable, and Keltner (2010) conducted two diary studies and a laboratory study where observers rated the satisfaction and responsiveness of a couple engaging in relationship talk. Impett et al. found that approach and avoidance goals were associated with relationship satisfaction, feelings of commitment, the experience of positive and negative emotions, and responsiveness. These findings support the notion that relationship goals influence perceptions of relationships.
In regards to eliciting triggers, relationship goals provide a filtering function by directing attention to those events that are goal-relevant and ignoring those that are not (Gable, 2006; Impett et al., 2010). Individuals rely on this filtering function to determine if the eliciting trigger is relevant to any relationship goals. Individuals filter out eliciting triggers by focusing on those events that facilitate goal attainment while avoiding those events that are not goal-relevant (Gable, 2006; Higgins & Spiegel, 2004). Those eliciting triggers that are goal-relevant are subjected to an uncertainty appraisal to determine whether or not to engage in information seeking.

**Uncertainty appraisals.** Eliciting triggers lead to appraisals that function to activate or suppress information seeking processes (Afifi & Weiner, 2004). Commonly, during early relationship development individuals make uncertainty appraisals, which play an important role in motivating people to manage their uncertainty (Brashers, 2001). Uncertainty appraisals have two dimensions: 1) High/low and 2) Positive/negative. Uncertainty appraisals play an important role in motivating one's response to uncertainty (Brashers, 2001).

Tiedens and Linton (2001) argued that higher appraisals of uncertainty influence cognitive processing. Tiedens and Linton further argued, that feelings of uncertainty were associated with more systematic processing regardless of emotional valence. Tiedens and Linton's arguments are consistent with theorization on information seeking by Afifi and Weiner (2004), who argued that individuals engage in information seeking when the level of uncertainty that one has is greater than they desire. Afifi and Weiner also argued that individuals engage in uncertainty appraisals and that these uncertainty appraisals provide the motivation (or demotivation) for information seeking.
Likewise, the valence (positive or negative) of uncertainty appraisals also motivates uncertainty management (Brashers, 2001). Tiedens and Linton (2001) argued that uncertainty appraisals operate on a continuum between good and bad, which suggests that uncertainty can indeed produce a wide range of emotional outcomes. Also, positive attributions may indicate safety or pleasure while negative attributions may signal danger (Brashers, 2001). These appraisals may activate or deactivate information seeking processes, which is moderated by one’s goals. If an individual is experiencing high uncertainty and in turn are more uncertain than they desire, then the relationship awareness process moves to the information seeking phase.

**Information Seeking Phase**

During early relationship development, individuals focus on information gathering in relation to making inferences about their relationships (Ogolsky, 2009), and they are motivated to be accurate in order to make a decision about whether or not they want a relationship with their prospective partner (Fletcher & Kerr, 2010). Early relationship development is full of uncertainty stemming from uncertainty about the potential relationship, the partner, and whether or not the relationship and new partner can be integrated into the individual’s life (Solomon & Knobloch, 2004).

As mentioned earlier, individuals engage in information seeking when the amount of uncertainty they have is greater than they desire (Afifi & Weiner, 2004). The determination of actual versus desired uncertainty can lead to a variety of actions in regards to uncertainty management. However, this discussion will focus on two actions, the decision to seek information or to do nothing. If one’s actual level of uncertainty is greater than their desired level, individuals will engage in information seeking. In
contrast, if the actual level of uncertainty is less than the desired level, then the individual will refrain from information seeking (Afifi & Weiner, 2004).

Our previously mentioned focus group study (Davis & Weigel, 2013) revealed four information sources people rely on to determine the status of their relationships: cognitive, emotion, social, and behavioral information. For example, we found that individuals reported that they compare their cognitive ideals to their relationship. We also found that individuals relied on their feelings to determine if the relationship was moving ahead smoothly or if their emotions might indicate that there is a problem in the relationship. Additionally, participants indicated that their relational awareness was motivated by information obtained from perceptions of their partner’s behavior (as well as their own) and by social approval/disproval from their social networks. These findings are consistent with TMIM (Afifi & Weiner, 2004), which states that individuals are motivated to seek out information to manage uncertainty. The remainder of this section will be dedicated to discussing the four information sources in detail.

**Cognitive information.** For the purposes of this dissertation cognition refers to one’s stored knowledge about themselves, others, and one’s relationships (Lewis & Brook-Gunn, 1979). As people interact with the world, they categorize incoming information and store it for future retrieval (Fiske, 2012). Relational information is generally stored as heuristics (Kammrath, et al., 2015) or schemas and scripts (Baldwin, 1992). People use these cognitive knowledge structures as a lens with which they view the world and interact with it (Moskowitz, 2005).

Research has shown that ideal standards influence people’s perceptions of their current relationship status and allows people to evaluate the development of the
relationship. Ideal standards serve as a means of comparing one’s relationship to their ideal (Campbell, Simpson, Kashy, and Fletcher, 2001), which individuals use to evaluate and make decisions about their relationships (Eastwick, Luchies, Finkel, & Hunt, 2014). Ideal standards are both global (about the relationship) and partner specific (Campbell et al., 2001).

Research by Eastwick, Finkel, and Eagly (2011) has demonstrated that close matches between relationship preferences or ideals across several traits with actual partner traits predicted higher evaluations of their partner. The results of this research are consistent with the idea that people use information obtained from making comparisons between their current relationship (and partner) and their ideal standards. In other words, relationship ideals act as information because they serve as a mental model of what people believe an ideal relationship and relationship partner should look like. Individuals compare their relationship model with the model of their real world experience to determine if they are in fact in a relationship. If the models are close, this signifies to the individual that this is an actual relationship. Conversely, if the models are not close, then the individuals will conclude that this is not a relationship.

**Emotion-based information.** A second component mentioned by participants in our focus group study is emotion. Much of the judgment and decision-making literature has demonstrated that emotions act as a piece of information that is readily accessible for individuals when making decisions (Clore, Gasper, & Garvin, 2001; Forgas, 1995; Robinson & Clore, 2002). For example Schwarz (2012) argued that people often consult their feelings when making a decision by asking themselves “How do I feel about this?” Once a person begins to evaluate how they feel about something, these feelings become
information, which can then be cognitively processed just like any other piece of information (Schwarz, 2012). Anecdotally, one can best relate to this type of processing as “going with your gut.” When one goes with their gut, they are simply relying on the information that they obtain from their feelings to make a decision.

Similarly, individuals who are entering a relationship might make a similar evaluation. When people enter a relationship, they often ask themselves “how do I feel about him/her?” or “how do I feel about this relationship?” This information may be powerful in determining whether the emerging relationship is one that the individual wishes to continue or not. For some who are entering a relationship, their feelings may be so intense that it overrides all other available information and thus becomes the sole piece of information that one relies upon when making relationship judgments. Thus, the type and intensity of the experienced emotion is another source of information that one relies upon to determine whether one is in a relationship.

**Social network information.** Social networks play an instrumental role in romantic relationships (Felmlee, 2006). In fact, our focus group participants (Davis & Weigel, 2013) provided many examples of messages from their social networks validating their relationships. For example, one participant mentioned that her mother said to her “Wow you two have a lot in common!” Another participant said, “His grandma introduced me as his girlfriend.” Additionally, a male participant said, “I think my friends are what helped me realize that I was in a relationship.” These quotes from participants are a few examples of how social networks can facilitate relationship awareness.
Social network influence is associated with increased relationship commitment, as well as increases in love and satisfaction (Sinclair & Ellithorpe, 2014). Social network members can inhibit (Knobloch & Donovan-Kicken, 2006) or facilitate (Etcheverry & Agnew, 2004; Etcheverry, Le, & Hoffman, 2013) relationships using social approval or disapproval. Additionally, social networks provide social norms, which guide relationship behaviors (Etcheverry & Agnew, 2004, Etcheverry, Le, & Charania, 2008). Social networks also have the potential to provide partners with more objective information than they can obtain on their own (Agnew, et al., 2001; Etcheverry & Agnew, 2004; Etcheverry, et al., 2008). In this sense, individuals rely on their social networks to validate their relationships (Etcheverry & Le, 2014). Moreover, social networks provide a “sounding board” for individuals to assess whether their partner is right for them (Etcheverry & Agnew, 2004). In other words, social networks provide information from a source that is outside of themselves and their relationship. Consequentially, social network information is unique in that it is detached from any bias or motivation that individuals have toward the relationships (Agnew et al., 2001).

Evidence from our focus group study suggests that social networks provide information through inquiries and messages about the status of the relationship (Davis & Weigel, 2013). For example, some participants mentioned that some of their networks would make direct inquiries about the status of the relationship, such as “what’s going on with you two?” Other participants mentioned that they received indirect messages such as “You two make a cute couple” or “You two would have cute babies.” Participants indicated that these types of direct and indirect messages provided validation for their relationship.
Furthermore, one of the key turning points in any romantic relationship is the point at which relationship partners make their relationship public to their social networks (Baxter & Bullis, 1986; Davis & Weigel, 2013; Sanri & Goodwin, 2014). Making one’s relationship open to the social network alerts others to the change in status in the relationship, and it allows the social network to send feedback about the relationship back to the individual. This information can be quite useful if one is still unsure of the future of the relationship. However, if one is highly attracted to their partner, it is quite likely that the social network influence may be weak or non-existent.

The social network literature suggests there are two major sources of social influence: social approval (Sprecher & Felmlee, 2000) and subjective norms (Etcheverry & Agnew, 2004). Also, I argue that perceived social network overlap also provides information about the perceived status or validity of one’s relationship. These topics will be discussed in further detail below.

**Social approval.** Research has demonstrated that social networks influence relationships through social influence and social approval (Etcheverry, et al., 2013; Felmlee, 2001, 2006). Social networks can provide social approval in a number of ways. The first way is through openly accepting the partner verbally (Knobloch & Donovan-Kicken, 2006). Another way that social networks show approval is by including the partner in family events. In our focus group study (Davis & Weigel, 2013), we found that many participants felt that their relationships were validated by either being included in their partner’s family events, or by having their partner included in their own family events. Of course, social networks can also influence relationships through disapproval. In our focus group study, one participant mentioned that her mother was not very positive
about her daughter’s long-distance relationship. The mother apparently indicated her disapproval by making comments like “it’s just a phase.”

Social network members may also influence the type of person one enters into a relationship with (Felmlee, 2001, 2006). For example, social network members may encourage an individual to enter into a relationship with someone who is in a similar group or social class. Social network members may also discourage individuals from entering into relationships with those who are not liked by members of the social network. For example, a disapproving parent may discourage their children from entering a relationship with an undesirable partner. Sprecher (2011) furthered this area of research by asking study participants about their influence in the relationships of friends and family, and found that the participants did report that they do actively show approval or disapproval of friends’ and family members’ relationships.

**Normative beliefs.** Normative beliefs are beliefs an individual holds about the opinion and attitudes of members of his or her social network (Ajzen, 1991) and are theorized to partially influence one’s behavioral intentions (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). Normative beliefs are important in the context of relationship awareness, as individuals are likely to consider possible reactions of their social network regarding the emerging relationship. Previous research has also demonstrated that social networks influence individual’s normative beliefs about their relationships (Etcheverry & Agnew, 2004; Etcheverry et al., 2008). For example, imagine that John meets Sara. John finds Sara attractive but wonders if his family, particularly his parents will approve of Sara. In this case, John’s belief about how he thinks his family will react to Sara becomes the basis of his normative beliefs. Of course, John is also likely to include his perceptions of his
entire social network and use that as information when making decisions about whether or not to pursue a relationship with Sara.

The scenario above suggests that individuals make self-evaluations about their relationships based upon their perceptions of how their relationships are viewed by their social networks. These evaluations allow each relationship partner to assess how the social networks of both partners perceive the relationship. Relationship partners are likely to view the opinions and beliefs of members of both social networks as an indicator of the validity of their relationship (Etcheverry & Agnew, 2004). Once the relationship has been initiated, subjective norms may act as a barrier to relationship dissolution by reducing the attractiveness of other relationship alternatives (Rusbult, 1983).

**Inclusion of the other’s network.** As a couple is forming a relationship, each person increases the size of their social network due to the inclusion of their partner’s social network into their own. As relationships develop, individuals begin to integrate their partner’s resources into their own (Aron et al., 1991) and the integration of social networks fosters feelings of closeness and intimacy (Etcheverry & Le, 2014). Additionally, the integration of social networks indicates a sense of merging one’s life with that of a partner. One way this can occur is for members of one person’s social network to begin to include his or her significant other. This act has the effect of communicating that the social group accepts both the relationship and the partner, thus increasing the legitimacy or validity of the relationship (Etcheverry & Le, 2014).

Aron and Aron (1996) argued that as relationship partners increase their intimacy with another, they self-expand and include the partner’s resources as their own. Notably, Aron and Aron argued that individuals incorporate their partner’s social resources, which
suggests that individuals in developing relationships are likely to include their partner’s social network into their own. In our focus group study (Davis & Weigel, 2013), we found that not only were individuals often motivated to include the other’s social network members within their own, but also that both partner’s social network included the new partner by involving them in social events. These findings suggest that social network overlap is a mutual process, whereby individuals and social networks move together to foster interdependence between relationship partners. Additionally, network overlap is also likely to indicate that one’s relationship is valid (Etcheverry & Le, 2014).

**Behavioral information.** Behaviors communicate symbolic meaning associated with culture (Baumeister, 2005). Baumeister (2005) argued that culture is a system of meaning, which informs our actions and our interactions with others. In this sense, behaviors are symbolic, and since behaviors generally occur within interactions with another person, these behaviors derive meaning in interaction (Stryker & Vryan, 2006). Given that behaviors occur within a social interaction, individuals rely on their own and their partner’s behaviors as indicators of each other’s intent toward the relationship (Weigel, 2008). Commitment behaviors symbolize one’s commitment to the relationship, and these behaviors have been associated with increased satisfaction and commitment (Weigel & Ballard-Reisch, 2002). Relationship behaviors can signal the amount of perceived equity in a relationship (Canary & Stafford, 1994; Stafford & Canary, 2006), commitment to the relationship (Weigel, 2008), and shared resources, identities, and perspectives (Ledbetter, 2013; Ledbetter, Stassen, Muhammad, & Kotey, 2010). Relationship behaviors provide a wide range of information about a relationship. For example, Weigel and Ballard-Reisch (2002) argued that individuals use a variety of
behavioral indicators to communicate their level of commitment to their partner such as providing affection, being supportive of their partner, reassuring their partner of their feelings, offering tangible reminders, creating a relationship future, behaving with integrity, working on the relationship, showing respect, being trustworthy, and making an effort to communicate. While Weigel has applied his behavioral indicators of commitment to couples in established relationships, relationship behaviors are theorized to occur at all phases of relationships (Dindia, 1994).

In our focus group study (Davis and Weigel, 2013), we asked participants to describe behaviors that were indicative of having entered into an actual relationship with a new partner. Much of the participants’ responses were consistent with Weigel’s behavioral indicators of commitment (Weigel, 2008; Weigel & Ballard-Reisch, 2002). These results suggest that Weigel and Ballard-Reisch’s behavioral indicators of everyday commitment are indeed multiphasic and are consciously reflected upon by individuals as they determine whether they are entering into a new relationship.

In summary, early relationship development is full of uncertainty (Knobloch & Solomon, 2005), and individuals in the information-seeking phase are motivated to seek out information during early relationship development in order to reduce uncertainty about the status of their relationships. Individuals engage in information seeking because they experience more uncertainty than they desire (Afifi & Weiner, 2004). Results from our focus group study (Davis & Weigel, 2013) indicated that people rely upon four sources of information in order to determine the status of their relationship (cognition, emotion, social, and behavior). Once the necessary information is obtained during the
information seeking process, the individual enters the relationship awareness phase where information is then integrated in order to make a judgment about the relationship.

**Relationship Awareness Phase**

During the relationship awareness phase, individuals have integrated all of the existing information. This information was either already available, or it was collected during the information seeking phase. Additionally, informational discrepancies are reconciled (Baumeister & Masicampo, 2010). Once the information is integrated, and any discrepancies are resolved, individuals use the information to create a mental model of their relationships. This mental model is experienced as a pluralistic representation of the relationship (Agnew et al., 1998). In other words, people mentally shift from an individual “I” orientation to a relational “we” orientation.

Once an individual has created a mental model, the individual becomes aware as to whether or not he or she is in an actual relationship. Individuals may experience the new found awareness that they are in a relationship as an “aha” moment in which the individual realizes that their relationship is real or legitimate. This experience is typically associated with positive emotion as individuals successfully begin a new relationship (Baumeister & Leary, 1995) or negative emotions if the relationship is unwanted. For the purposes of the dissertation, the discussion will focus on those individuals who experience the “aha” moment and do desire the relationship.

Also, this newly found awareness serves as an affirmation to the individual indicating that they are in a relationship. Individuals not only have a pluralistic representation of the relationship, but the relationship also becomes a central focus of their lives (Agnew et al., 1998), and they develop a communal orientation where they
shift from acting in their self-interests to actively anticipating the needs of their partner (Clark & Mills, 1979, 2012). Collectively, pluralistic representations, relationship centrality, and communal orientation are consistent with Baumeister and Masicampo’s (2010) argument that one of the functions of conscious thought is the ability to take the perspective of others. Furthermore, once one becomes aware of the relationship, this new awareness is likely to influence future relationship behaviors (Agnew et al., 1998; Rusbult, Olsen, Davis, & Hannon, 2004).

**The Influence of Life Stage on Relational Awareness**

I believe that the basic process of relationship awareness is generally the same regardless of life stage. Certainly, individuals have relational knowledge structures and experience emotional states in both emerging adulthood and adulthood, as these components are evolutionarily adapted for attachment relationships (Bowlby, 1969). Both emerging adults and adults also have social networks, which influence their relationships, and both emerging adults and adults examine the behaviors of others as well as their own behaviors to evaluate their relationships. In terms of relationship awareness, what potentially separates emerging adults from adults is the developmental context. For example, emerging adults may have more limited relationship experience, so they might be more inclined to seek information from outside sources such as peers or even the media. In the focus group conducted by Davis and Weigel (2013) referenced earlier, we found that peers heavily influenced emerging adults. However, parents were also quite influential. Additionally, emerging adults may experience more difficulty noticing relational communication or inferring relational intentions through behavior (Knobloch & Solomon, 2005).
In contrast, adults may generally be more likely to have had more relationship experience, and, therefore, are likely more adept at noticing relational communication and behaviors. This was the case in one of the focus groups conducted by Davis and Weigel (2013). A participant who was in her early thirties indicated that she met her partner and they both seemed to know the relationship was something special. From her perspective, awareness of the relationship came to her very quickly. One potential explanation is that she and her partner were much more skilled at recognizing relationship behaviors and communication, thus speeding up the process of recognizing the relationship and coming to the “aha” moment.

Both emerging adults and adults are both generally motivated to seek out relationships (Taylor et al., 2013). However, for emerging adults this phase of life is about exploration (Arnett, 2000). Additionally, because the lives of emerging adults are less structured their behavior appears to be more unpredictable (Arnett, 2000). Perhaps part of the exploration for emerging adults is recognizing when they are in a relationship by learning to identify the “aha” moment.

In conclusion, relationship awareness is a mental model of the current state of one’s relationship with another. Relationship awareness allow people to think of themselves and their partners as a collective unit where the relationship becomes a central focus (Agnew et al., 1998), and individuals move from an individual orientation to a communal orientation (Clark & Mills, 1979, 2012). Relationship awareness then provides a motivation for future relationship behaviors (Agnew et al., 1998; Rusbult et al., 2004). Next, the dissertation will present the study hypothesis and research questions.
**Hypothesis and Research Questions**

Based on the qualitative results from Davis and Weigel’s (2013) focus group study, and the tenets of UMT and TMIM, the current study seeks to extend Davis and Weigel’s results by conducting a survey of people who are currently in the early period of relationship development (first 90 days) and examining the relationships among uncertainty, various information sources (cognition, emotion, social, and behavior), and relationship awareness. Based on the results from Davis and Weigel (2013), I present the following hypothesis and research questions, followed by the proposed structural model, which is depicted in Figure 2.

H1. Higher levels of uncertainty will be associated with higher use of the four information sources.

RQ1. To what degree does the use of the information sources account for the total level of relationship awareness (as measured by $R^2$)?

RQ2. Are one or more of the information sources more strongly associated with relationship awareness (as measured by standardized estimates of the parameters in a structural model)?

RQ3. To what degree do the information sources mediate the association between uncertainty and relationship awareness?
Figure 2. Proposed structural model for the dissertation.
Chapter 3: Method

The purpose of this chapter is to present the methodological rationale, the methods, procedures, participants, and study measures used in the dissertation. A survey was conducted to assess the relationship between information seeking and relationship awareness during early relationship development. The survey utilized two convenience samples that provided a current account of participants’ experiences of becoming aware of their relationship during the early stages of relationship development. The chapter will first provide the rationale for the study. The chapter will then discuss the sample characteristics including inclusion criteria and the power analysis used to determine the appropriate sample size for the study. Next, the chapter will cover the study measures. Finally, the chapter will conclude with a discussion of the data analysis plan for the dissertation.

Design Rationale

In deciding upon the methodology for this dissertation, a total of four methods were considered: experimental manipulation of uncertainty, experimental design using vignettes, qualitative study, and a survey study. Experimental studies would be useful in determining the causal nature of the relationship between relationship uncertainty, information seeking, and relationship awareness. However, such a study would be premature since the existence of the process of relationship awareness has not yet been verified. An exploratory study was first needed to verify the proposed model before an experimental study can be conducted with confidence. Furthermore, this exploratory study will also be informative in guiding hypotheses for future experimental studies. Correspondingly, experiments using vignettes have the disadvantage of examining
relationship awareness from the third person perspective. Even if vignettes are created so that the person is imagining the scenarios as they happened to them, they are imagining a hypothetical scenario. Thus, vignettes may not allow participants to adequately reflect upon the experience as it happens in real life. Alternatively, qualitative designs have the ability to capture the richness of one’s conscious experiences during early relationship development. Qualitative designs also allow for the building of grounded theory. However, a quantitative approach is necessary to verify the proposed process of relationship awareness since the purpose of this dissertation is to test the proposed model. Additionally, I believe that a quantitative approach is better suited to answer some lingering questions about how relationship awareness operates during early relationship development that cannot be examined with qualitative methods. In fact, I used a qualitative approach in two previous studies and the results led to the quantitative approach used in this dissertation.

Finally, while survey methods have limitations, I believe it is the best method for this dissertation. Surveys are often used in relationship research to test theoretical models (e.g., Campbell, Simpson, Boldly, & Kashy, 2005; Fox & Warber, 2013; Hazan & Shaver, 1987). Conducting a survey allowed me to test the associations proposed in the relationship awareness model I outlined in Figure 2. Naturally, a survey cannot determine the causal relationships but it can confirm that the process exists. Another limitation of a survey is that participants are often biased in their memories of the events that occurred in early relationship development. While these limitations will limit our understanding of the process of relationship awareness during early relationship development, it did not prevent the verification of the process itself. In addition, although participants will likely
be biased in their reports, this information is still useful as the relationship literature has repeatedly demonstrated that people in a relationship have a positive bias (Gagne & Lydon, 2004; Lackenbauer, Campbell, Rubin, Fletcher, & Troister, 2010; Murray, Holmes, & Griffin, 1996; Neff & Karney, 2002) and it is more likely than not that people in real life carry these biased memories with them as their relationship develops. In other words, it is quite likely that people carry these positive biases (or even negative ones) with them in their relationship, and that these biases influence their relationship awareness.

Participants

This study utilized two samples: an emerging adult sample (ages 18-25) and an adult sample (ages 26 and up). The emerging adult sample had 266 participants, while the adult sample had 219. Emerging adults were primarily recruited from the University of Nevada, Social Psychology subject pool or SONA (67 participants came from Amazon’s Mechanical Turk also known as MTurk). On the other hand, the adult sample was primarily recruited from MTurk (seven participants came from SONA). A total of 206 participants were recruited through SONA and 279 were recruited through MTurk. SONA participants were students at the University of Nevada, Reno who were enrolled in participating courses across various social science departments such as Sociology, Criminal Justice, Communication, and Human Development and Family Studies. In comparison, MTurk workers are self-employed individuals who perform tasks online and are paid for each task they complete. The majority of this population ranges in age from 18 to 40, and most are employed (outside of MTurk) either full or part-time, with full timers slightly outnumbering the part-timers. MTurkers are generally fairly well educated.
with 57% of MTurk workers having a Bachelors or advanced degree (Ross, Zaldivar, Irani, & Tomlinson, 2010). Fifty-one percent of MTurkers make over $30,000 per year and 18% make over $60,000 per year. Even though MTurkers have a higher level of education and income than the general U.S. population, they were chosen because they are more similar to the general U.S. population than a traditional college sample. Thus, the use of an MTurk sample makes the results more generalizable to the U.S. adult population (Ross et al. 2010).

Participants were asked to respond to items based upon their current perceptions of their relationships. With this in mind, participants for both samples were required to be either seeing someone with whom they believe there is potential for a long-term relationship or in the early stages of their relationship (first 90 days). The wording in the SONA and MTurk posts read, “You need to currently be in the early stages of your relationship (first 90 days), or seeing someone with whom you believe there is potential for a long-term relationship”. Additionally, participants were required to be at least 18 years of age.

A power analysis was conducted to assess the a priori sample size estimate for each sample using an online apriori sample size calculator from the website www.danielsoper.com. The website was developed by Dr. Daniel Soper who has developed a wide array of stats calculators for calculating sample size for tests such as regression, ANOVA, T-tests, and SEM. In the present study, I used SEM as my primary analysis strategy and the web address for the SEM sample size calculator can be found at http://www.danielsoper.com/statcalc3/calc.aspx?id=89 (Soper, 2015). This calculation was confirmed by using tables for determining SEM sample size by Hancock and
Freeman (2001). The power analysis was originally run for a structural model consisting of 8 latent variables and 38 observed variables. The results indicated that a minimum sample of 91 participants for each sample (i.e., emerging adults and adults) for a medium effect size using Pearson r = 0.30 and a power of 0.80. However, to account for the likelihood that a large model, such as the one under investigation, is likely to achieve only moderate fit, along with the likelihood of missing data within the sample, I increased the sample for each group based upon charts provided by Hancock and Freeman (2001) to increase the likelihood of achieving model fit, with the intention of recruiting a minimum of 200 participants per sample. The sample demographics are displayed in Table 1.

**Procedures**

The survey was housed on SurveyMonkey, and participants were directed to the survey website by a web link. Once the participants read the information sheet, they continued on to the study and the questionnaire was administered (see Appendix). Participants received course credit (SONA participants) or monetary compensation ($2.50 per MTurk participant) for their participation in the study. Upon completion of data collection, the responses were transferred to SPSS and STATA for data analysis.

**Measures**

Participants were asked to respond to all of the survey items based upon their current perceptions of their relationship. Demographics were assessed for gender, age, education, and ethnicity. Also, participants were asked about their relationship status, how long they have been in their current relationship or how long they have been seeing their current partner if they were not in a formal relationship. The means, standard
deviations, and Cronbach’s alpha scores for all measures used in the study are listed in Table 2.

**Eliciting Triggers.** In order to focus participants’ thoughts about their relationship awareness, participants were asked to answer one of two focusing questions based on their current relationship status. Participants who were currently in a relationship were asked to write a few sentences about what was happening when they became aware that they were in a relationship. For participants who were seeing someone with whom they believed there was potential for a long-term relationship, participants were asked to write a few sentences about how they would know that they are in an actual relationship.

**Relational Uncertainty.** Relational uncertainty was assessed using Knobloch, Miller, Bond, and Mannone’s (2007) 12-item relational uncertainty measure. The measure is an abbreviated version of the Knobloch and Solomon’s (1999) relational uncertainty measure. The 12-item measure taps the three types of relational uncertainty as conceptualized and tested by Knobloch and Solomon (1999): self-uncertainty, partner uncertainty, and relationship uncertainty. Each of the subscales contains four items assessing each type of uncertainty. The items are preceded by a stem that reads “How certain are you about…” The items were scored on a seven-point scale (1 = *completely or almost completely uncertain* to 7 = *completely or almost completely certain*). During data analysis the scores were reverse coded so that higher scores indicated higher degrees of uncertainty, which allowed for ease of interpretation. The self uncertainty and partner uncertainty subscales were highly correlated ($r (468)= .75, p < .001$), as were the partner uncertainty and relationship uncertainty subscales ($r (469) = .85, p < .001$), as well as the
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic</th>
<th>Emerging Adult</th>
<th>Adult</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total n</strong></td>
<td>266</td>
<td>219</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Males</td>
<td>105 (39.5%)</td>
<td>125 (57%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females</td>
<td>158 (60%)</td>
<td>94 (43%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1 (.5%)</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>20.99</td>
<td>35.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median</td>
<td>21.00</td>
<td>32.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Relationship Status</strong></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dating one person exclusively</td>
<td>204 (76.5%)</td>
<td>209 (95%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dating multiple people</td>
<td>26 (10%)</td>
<td>6 (3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsure if I am in a relationship</td>
<td>35 (13%)</td>
<td>4 (2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did not report</td>
<td>1 (.5%)</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Relationship Length (months)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>1.70</td>
<td>1.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>2.00</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Ethnicity</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>169 (77%)</td>
</tr>
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<td>33 (12%)</td>
<td>17 (8%)</td>
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<td>Asian American or Pacific Islander</td>
<td>21 (8%)</td>
<td>13 (6%)</td>
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<tr>
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<td>14 (5%)</td>
<td>16 (7%)</td>
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<td>2 (1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did not report</td>
<td>2 (1%)</td>
<td>2 (1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Education</strong></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school graduate</td>
<td>52 (20%)</td>
<td>30 (13.5%)</td>
</tr>
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<td>Some college, no degree</td>
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<td>52 (24%)</td>
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<td>Bachelor’s degree</td>
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<td>81 (37%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advanced degree</td>
<td>3 (1%)</td>
<td>24 (11%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
self uncertainty and relationship uncertainty subscales \((r (466) = .81, p < .001)\). Therefore, due to the high intercorrelations among the subscales and for parsimony in the subsequent structural models, I combined the three subscales into a total relational uncertainty variable.

**Relationship Goals.** A total of three items were used to measure relationship goals. The relationship goal items asked participants about whether they see their relationship as long-term versus short-term, and whether they want to have romantic intentions toward their relationship and their partner. These items were also used as observed variables in the subsequent structural model, as part of an uncertainty appraisal latent variable.

**Long-term vs. short-term goals.** Relationship goals about short-term versus long-term relationships were measured with a single item, created by the author, which asked participants “To what degree do you want this relationship to be something that is short-term or long-term?” The item was scored on a seven-point scale \((1 = \text{short-term} \text{ to } 7 = \text{long-term})\).

**Relationship outcome goals.** Two modified items taken from Guerrero and Chavez (2005) were used to measure relationship outcome goals: “I would like our situation to develop into a romantic relationship” and “I have romantic feelings for my partner.” The items were scored separately on a seven-point scale \((1 = \text{disagree strongly} \text{ to } 7 = \text{agree strongly})\). Guerrero and Chavez reported an inter-item alpha of .97.

**Cognitive Information Sources.** Previous research has shown that people not only rely on their ideals as a source of information about their relationship they also rely on the discrepancy (or lack of) to evaluate the status of their relationships (Campbell,
Simpson, Kashy, & Fletcher, 2001; Fletcher, Simpson, & Thomas, 2000). In order to assess the use of cognitive information sources in relationship awareness during early relationship development, this study measured how closely partners match the participants’ relationship ideals, the discrepancy between one’s current relationship and their ideal, and the match between one’s relationship and expectations based upon participants’ relationship scripts.

**Partner ideal fit.** The match between partner and one’s own ideals was assessed using the ideal partner scale developed by Franiuk, Pomerantz, and Cohen (2004). The measure consists of seven items, which assess perceived partner fit. Example items include: “My partner is as close to ideal as a relationship partner as I ever expect to find” and “My current partner is the ‘right’ match for me.” The items were measured on a seven-point scale (1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*), with higher rated items indicating higher perceptions of partner fit.

**Relationship ideal discrepancy match.** Perceived relationship fit was assessed using a single item developed by the author. The item read, “My current relationship matches my ideal.” Participants were asked to rate their level of agreement with the item, which was scored on a seven-point scale (1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*).

**Relationship script match.** Relationship scripts were assessed using a single item developed by the author. The item read: “Everyone has expectations about how a relationship should develop. Please tell us how closely your relationship matches your expectations about how a relationship should unfold.” Participants rated the item on a seven-point scale (1 = *does not match at all* to 7 = *matches completely*).
Behavioral Information Sources. People notice the behaviors that both they and their partners use, and results from our focus group study (Davis & Weigel, 2013) suggested that participants might interpret the status of the relationship from those behaviors. Therefore, perceptions of self and partner relationship behaviors were assessed using Weigel’s (2008) behavioral commitment indicator scale. Commitment behaviors are conceptualized to be multiphasic (Dindia, 1994), and recent work by Davis and Weigel (2013) found qualitative evidence that individuals use everyday indicators of commitment during the early stages of relationship development, in support of the notion that commitment behaviors are indeed multiphasic. The scale was used in the survey twice, once to determine self-use of the commitment indicators and once to determine partner use. When assessing self-use of the commitment indicators, participants were asked, “How often do you use each of the following behaviors to indicate your commitment to your partner?” Conversely when assessing partner use of the commitment indicators, participants were asked, “How often does your partner use each of the following behaviors to indicate his/her commitment to you?” The scale consists of 29 items measuring commitment behaviors on six factors. The items were measured on a six-point scale (1 = never to 6 = all of the time). For parsimony in the subsequent structural models, I reduced the behavioral indicators to two subscales, self and partner behaviors. Cronbach’s alpha for the self-behaviors subscale was .95 for the full sample, and .94 for the emerging adult and adult samples. Cronbach’s alpha for the partner behaviors subscale was .96 for the full and emerging adult samples, and .95 for the adult sample.

Social Information Sources. Measures of social information sources used in this study included perceptions of social network norms, network overlap between partners,
and approval or disapproval of network members about the fledgling relationship. The measures are described below.

**Normative beliefs.** Normative beliefs were measured using a modified version of the normative belief items taken from Etcheverry and Agnew (2004) that are designed to assess one’s perception of network approval. I modified the original items from a semantic scoring system developed by Ajzen (1991) to a Likert-type scoring system (1 = I completely disagree to 7 = I completely agree) in order to reduce the cognitive load of the items on participants. The four items are as follows: “Those who are important to me think I should continue in my current romantic relationship.” “Those who are important to me think that I do not have a current romantic relationship worth keeping.” “Those who are important to me think that this is a good current romantic relationship for me.” “Those who are important to me are not supportive of my current romantic relationship.” The second and fourth items were reverse coded.

**Social network overlap.** Two items were used to assess social network overlap. The first item was a social network overlap item developed by Sprecher and Felmlee (2000). Participants were asked, “To what degree do you and your partner share mutual friends?” The item was scored on a seven-point scale (1 = our social networks do not overlap at all to 7 = our social networks overlap completely).

The second measure of social network overlap was a newly created inclusion of others social network scale (IOSN). The IOSN is a revised version of the inclusion of others in the self scale (IOS; Aron et al., 1992), created by the author to measure social network overlap. Like the IOS, the IOSN consists of a series of seven Venn diagrams. The diagrams range from (1 = two separate circles indicating no overlap at all) to 7 (almost
complete overlap). The Venn diagrams represent the amount of perceived overlap between self and partner’s social networks. The participants selected the Venn diagram that best matched the degree of perceived social network overlap between their social networks and their partners; closer Venn diagrams indicated increasing levels of social network overlap.

**Social network approval/disapproval.** Social network approval/disapproval was assessed using six items created by Sprecher and Felmlee (2000). The first four items asked participants about the level of approval/disapproval from the participant’s family, participant’s friends, partner’s family, and partner’s friends. The four items were proceeded by the stem “To what degree do you think that each of the following disapproves/approves of your relationship? The participants rated each item using a seven-point scale (1 = very much disapproves to 7 very much approves). The fifth item asked participants, “Overall, how much actual discouragement or encouragement do you get from others to continue seeing your partner?” and was measured on a seven-point scale (1 = discouraged a great deal to 7 = encouraged a great deal). Lastly, the sixth item asked participants, “Overall, to what degree do others view you and your partner as a perfect couple who should marry someday?” The sixth item was measured on a seven-point scale (1 = not at all to 7 = a great deal).

**Emotion-based Information Sources.** Emotional information was measured using a list of 28 emotions compiled from Simpson (1990). The list of emotions was preceded by a prompt that states, “Please think about the emotions that you have experienced with your partner. Please indicate the degree to which you have experienced each of the following emotions.” The emotions were measured on a seven-point scale (1 =
not at all to 7 = experienced a lot). Simpson (1990) split the 28 emotions into four subscales: 1) Intense positive emotion (e.g. excited, elated), 2) Mild positive emotion (e.g. calm, serene), 3) Mild negative emotion (e.g. rejected, sad), and 4) Intense negative emotion (e.g. angry, fearful). The intense positive and mild positive emotion subscales were highly correlated ($r (444)= .76, p < .001$), as were the intense negative and mild negative subscales ($r (460) = .91, p < .001$). Therefore, for parsimony in the subsequent structural models, I reduced the number of subscales from four to two, and named them positive and negative emotions. Cronbach’s alpha for the positive emotions subscale was .91 for the full, emerging adult, and adult samples. Cronbach’s alphas for the negative emotions subscale were .96 for the full sample, .95 for the emerging adult sample, and .94 for the adult sample.

**Relationship Awareness.** Relationship awareness was assessed using proxy measures examining centrality of the relationship (Agnew, et al., 1998), inclusion of others within the self (Aron, et al., 1992), communal strength (Mills, Clark, Ford, & Johnson, 2004), and dyadic perspective taking (Long, 1990; Long & Andrews, 1990). The rationale for using these measures as proxies for awareness was that one of the main functions of consciousness is that it allows individuals to take on the perspective of others. Therefore, it stands to reason that individuals use the same processes when utilizing conscious thought to assess their relationships. In fact, Agnew et al. (1998) argued that cognitive interdependence is a pluralistic mental representation in which the two partners cognitively operate as one unit, which requires awareness of self and partner. Additionally, Aron, Lewandowski, Mashek, and Aron (2013) argued that by including the other into the self, one takes on the other’s perspectives, resources, and identities. Similar
to cognitive interdependence, the inclusion of others in the self also requires an awareness of self and partners. Likewise, Mills et al. (2004) argued that communal strength motivates people to meet their partner’s needs and even place their partner’s needs above their own. Again, for one to anticipate the needs of their partner and even place those needs above their own requires an awareness of self and partner. Additionally, Donald (2001) argued that one of the functions of consciousness that evolved in humans is the ability to view the world from another’s perspective. In summary, the common link between cognitive interdependence, inclusion of others in the self, communal strength, and dyadic perspective taking is that they all require an awareness of both self and partner. This idea of being aware of self and partner is consistent with the perspective of Baumeister and Masicampo (2010) who argued that conscious thought allows one to intuit a close other’s perspectives and thoughts. Therefore, I argue that cognitive interdependence, the inclusion of others within the self, communal strength, and dyadic perspective taking act as suitable proxies for my view of relationship awareness.

**Centrality of the relationship.** Centrality of the relationship was the first indicator of cognitive interdependence. Agnew et al. (1998) argued that close relationships compete for time and energy with other aspects of life such as work, leisure, etc. Thus, according to Agnew et al., as people increase their commitment to their relationship, the relationship become increasingly more central to one’s thoughts. Similarly, Graziano (2013) argued that mental models representing various aspects of one’s life compete to enter conscious awareness. Consequentially, as people enter relationships and become increasingly committed to that relationship, the relationship should become increasingly more central
in one’s thoughts. Therefore, the centrality of the relationship measure serves as a proxy of awareness associated with the centrality of one’s thoughts.

The centrality of the relationship was measured with four items taken from Agnew et al. (1998) and modified by Dan Weigel and myself in a previous study to clarify the language. The relationship centrality items are “My overall feelings of life satisfaction are greatly impacted by events in my romantic life”, “In comparison to other parts of my life (e.g. school, family, friends, religion, etc.), my relationship with my partner is the most central aspect of my life”, “I spend most of my time thinking about my partner”, and “When considering all the things that give my life meaning, my relationship with my partner is the most important.” The items were scored on a seven-point scale (1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree).

**Inclusion of others in the self.** The inclusion of others in the self measures the degree to which participants perceive that the other has been integrated into one’s sense of self. It is often seen as an indicator of relationship closeness and a proxy for an individuals’ mental model of the relationship (Aron et al., 1992). Two measures of the inclusion of the self were used. First, the inclusion of others in the self scale (IOS; Aron, et al., 1992) measures perceived closeness by using a series of Venn diagrams representing self and partner. Participants indicated the level of overlap between self and partner by selecting one of seven Venn diagrams ranging from two separate circles to almost completely overlapping circles, representing varying degrees of perceived closeness. The participants were asked to select the number of the Venn diagram that best describes their relationship with their current partner. The IOS was scored by giving a value of 1 to the diagram of separate circles, 2 to almost separate circles, and so on up to a
score of 7 for completely overlapping circles. Aron et al. (1992) performed a test-retest reliability check, which resulted in a correlation of $r = .85$. The IOS scale has been associated with cognitive interdependence (Agnew et al., 1998; Aron, et al., 1991). Additionally, a meta-analysis conducted by Le, Dove, Agnew, Korn, and Mutso (2010) found that the IOS was strongly associated with relationship stability.

The second measure of the inclusion of self is the IOS perceived scale (IOS-P). It was created by Tomlinson and Aron (2013) and is identical to the IOS scale except that it has a different set of instructions. The instructions for the IOS-P were taken from Tomlinson and Aron (2013) as follows:

> For this question, we would like you to please answer the next question as if you were your partner. That is, tell us the answer you think your partner would give if asked. Please indicate which of the pictures below you think represents your partner’s view of the relationship. (Tomlinson & Aron, 2013, p. 4)

In their study, Tomlinson and Aron (2013) used both the IOS and IOS-P to measure perceptions of self and partner’s closeness. Tomlinson and Aron found that the IOS-P mediated the relationship between relationship satisfaction and IOS. Although Tomlinson and Aron did not report any psychometrics on the IOS-P, the IOS has been modified to fit a wide variety of contexts including group relations (Tropp & Wright, 2001), inclusion of one’s hero into the self (Sullivan & Venter, 2005), inclusion of community in the self (Mashek, Cannaday, & Tangney, 2007), and inclusion of the natural environment within the self (Schultz, Shriver, Tabanico, & Khazian, 2004). These various modifications to the IOS measure demonstrate its ability to be applied in a variety of contexts.
**Communal strength.** According to Mills et al. (2004) communal strength can be conceptualized as the degree to which individuals are willing to sacrifice to meet their partner’s needs and the level of distress they might feel if their partner’s needs are not met. To be willing to sacrifice for another or feel a certain level of distress requires people to be able to anticipate their partner’s needs. In turn, anticipating the partner's needs requires one to be able to take on their partner’s perspective. Thus, communal strength is a good proxy for relationship awareness. Communal strength has been associated with sacrificing an individual’s personal needs for the needs of his or her partner (Kogan, Impett, Oveis, Hui, Gordon, & Keltner, 2010), enhancing their perceptions of communal strength within the relationship (Lambert, Clark, Durtschi, Fincham, & Graham, 2010), and their attributions of attractive relationship partners (Lemay, Clark, & Greenberg, 2010).

Communal strength was measured using the communal strength measure (Mills et al., 2004). The communal strength measure asked participants to keep their significant other in mind as they answer 10 items. An example of an item from the scale is “How reluctant would you be to sacrifice for your partner___?” The items were scored on a seven-point scale (1 = not at all to 7 = extremely).

**Dyadic perspective taking.** Dyadic perspective taking is defined as mentally putting one’s self in the place of a partner (Long, 1990; Long, & Andrews, 1990). Dyadic perspective taking allows individuals to imagine what their partners are likely thinking about, or how they might react to a certain situation. Long (1990) argued that perspective taking is the cognitive component of empathy. Dyadic perspective taking has been associated with greater marital adjustment (Long & Andrews, 1990), satisfaction (Gordon,
Tuskeviciute, & Chen, 2013), and forgiveness (Welton, Hill, & Seybold, 2008), and negatively correlated with dating violence (Wolfe, Wekerle, Scott, Straatman, & Grassley, 2004), and depressive mood (Gordon, et al., 2013). Dyadic perspective taking is measured with two scales: Self-Dyadic Perceptive Taking Scale (SDPT) and Other Dyadic Perspective Taking Scale (ODPT).

**SDPT.** The SPDT consists of 13 items that measure participants’ self-reported perspective taking of their partners. Example items include “I very often seem to know how my partner feels” and “I sometimes try to understand my partner better by imagining how things look from his or her perspective” The items were measured on a seven-point scale (1 = *Does not describe me very well* to 7 = *Does describe me very well*).

**ODPT.** The OPDT consists of 20 items, which measures the extent to which participants perceive their partner is taking their perspective into account. Example items include “My partner is not good at understanding my problems” and “My partner is accurately able to compare his/her point of view with mine.” The items were measured on a seven-point scale (1 = *Does not describe me very well* to 7 = *Does describe me very well*).

**Analytic Strategy**

**Data cleaning.** The data was examined and cleaned prior to conducting any analyses. More specific detail of the results of the data screening will be presented in Chapter 4. The data was checked for outliers and multi-collinearity using procedures recommended by Mertler and Vannatta (2005). Also, the data was tested for univariate normality, and since relationship data tend to have a naturally positive skew, the standard error was examined to ensure that the estimates were normally distributed. As expected,
the data was generally positively skewed, but the procedures listed above resulted in determining that the assumptions of normality were met.

**Strategy for preliminary analyses.** Preliminary analyses began with running Pearson correlations to verify the proposed associations under investigation in the model. Additionally, a 2x2 multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted to determine if there were any differences between developmental stage (emerging adult vs. adult) and gender on relationship awareness measures along with an additional MANOVA for each of the information sources. Since significant differences were found between samples, I conducted separate analyses for each sample. However, since no significant gender differences were found, all analyses were run with males and females combined. Results of the MANOVAs are presented in Chapter 4.

**Main analyses.** In this section, I will review the hypothesis and each research question so that it is clear what the analysis plan was for each. First, the hypothesis (Higher levels of uncertainty will be associated with higher use of information sources) was analyzed by using Pearson correlations. Once the hypothesis was tested, research questions 1 through 3 were tested using SEM. The remainder of this section provides a detailed explanation of the analytic strategy for each of the research questions.

The SEM model had a total of three latent variables, which were measured with 14 observed variables. The first latent variable was uncertainty appraisal, which was measured with four indicators. The first indicator was the measure of relational intention (long-term vs. short-term), which was created for this dissertation. The second and third indicators were the two relationship outcome goal items adapted from Guerrero and Chavez (2005). The fourth indicator was relational uncertainty, which was measured by
creating a composite variable composed of the three subscales from Knobloch et al.’s Relational Uncertainty scale (self, partner, and relationship uncertainty). The second latent variable was cognitive information sources, which was measured with the Franiuk et al. (2004) ideal partner scale, as well as the relationship ideal discrepancy and relational script items. The third latent variable was the social information sources, which was measured by Etcheverry and Agnew’s (2004) normative beliefs scale, Sprecher and Felmlee’s (2000) social approval/disapproval items (minus the self family and friends items, see the results section for an explanation) and their social network overlap item, and the IOSN.

The remainder of the model was measured using observed variables. The first set of observed variables measured emotion-based information, which was measured using two subscales (positive and negative emotions) adapted from Simpson’s (1990) frequency of emotion index. The next set of observed variables measured behavioral information (self and partner behaviors), which was measured with Weigel’s (2008) commitment indicators. The commitment indicators were combined to create two composite variables for self and partner behaviors. The final set of observed variables measured relationship awareness, which consisted of the centrality of relationship measure (Agnew et al., 1998), IOS (Aron et al., 1992), IOS-P (Tomlinson & Aron, 2013), the communal strength measure (Mills et al., 2004), and the SDPT and ODPT (Long, 1990; Long & Andrews, 1990).

Prior to testing the research questions and the hypothesized structural model, a series of confirmatory factor analyses (CFA) were conducted to establish the latent variables to be used in the analyses, provide a rationale for creating the composite
variables, and providing construct validity for the relationship awareness variables. Once
the CFA’s were conducted, and the latent variables were properly specified, the proposed
structural model was tested with fit of the model judged using several established fit
indicators including non-significant chi-square (Kline, 2011), RMSEA with values
between below .08 (Browne & Cudeck, 1993), the comparative fit index (CFI; values over
.90; Kline, 2011), and the Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI; values over .90 West, Taylor, & Wu,
2012). It is important to note that chi-square is considered to be unreliable in highly
powered samples (Hoyle, 2012); in such cases I still reported the chi-square but I relied
upon the RMSEA, CFI, and TLI, as recommended by (West, Taylor, & Wu, 2012).
Modification indices that fit within the theoretical parameters of the model were used to
determine which parts of the model needed to be modified to increase model fit. The
model was then re-tested for model fit. The process was repeated until a model with
appropriate fit was achieved, and the data could then be interpreted.

As mentioned above, research question 1 (To what degree do the information
sources account for the total level of relationship awareness as measured by \( R^2 \)) and
research question 2 (Are one or more of the information sources more strongly associated
with relationship awareness as measured by unstandardized estimates of the parameters in
a structural model?) were analyzed using SEM. Research question 3, which examined
potential direct and indirect effects, was tested within the structural model using the
teffects function in STATA to decompose the direct and indirect effects for each of the
mediated relationships depicted in the model (see Figure 2) as outlined by the UCLA
statistical consulting group (UCLA consulting group, n.d.).
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*Table 2. Scale Means, Standard Deviations, and Reliability*
Table 2. Scale Means, Standard Deviations, and Reliability (continued)

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Table 2. *Scale Means, Standard Deviations, and Reliability (continued)*

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Chapter 4: Results

The results of the analyses for the current study are presented in this chapter. First the procedures for data preparation and cleaning are presented. Then I will present the descriptive statistics. Next, I will discuss the correlations between the variables of interest and address the study hypothesis. Then the chapter will move on the main analyses starting with Research Question 1, which examines the degree to which the hypothesized information sources account for the total level of relationship awareness. Next, I will explore Research Question 2, which examines the strength of the association between the information sources and relationship awareness. Lastly, I will examine the mediating role of the hypothesized information sources on relationship uncertainty and relationship awareness (Research Question 3).

Data Preparation and Cleaning

Prior to any analyses, data were examined for univariate and multivariate normality. Overall the variables demonstrated univariate and multivariate normality. The majority of variables showed reasonable skewness and kurtosis (± 1; Mertler & Vanatta, 2005). For the majority of the variables, histograms and scatterplots confirmed that the variables were relatively normally distributed. Additionally, P-P and Q-Q plots indicated that the majority of the variables under investigation were quite linear. Additionally, the variables exhibited normality, linearity and homosedacity as scatterplots revealed that the standardized predicted versus standardized residual plots were rectangular in shape and clustering around zero.

However, there were four variables that required additional attention. The negative emotions variable demonstrated skewness and kurtosis that were well outside
the acceptable ±1 range, which was verified by examining the histogram. Outlier removal did not resolve the problem; therefore I attempted to transform the variable to address the normality issue. I attempted a square root transformation and a log transformation without success, but the inverse transformation was successful, and was thus retained for analysis. Communal strength, self-perspective taking and other perspective taking were also problematic, but the issue was resolved through outlier removal. Overall, at total of 33 outliers were removed which accounted for approximately 6% of the total sample (emerging adults = 16 outliers 5.7% of the sample; adults = 17 outliers 7.2% of the sample).

**Testing for Sample Differences**

Chi-square analyses were run to examine possible differences between emerging adult and adult samples on demographic variables such as gender, education level, number of participants in a relationship, and relationship status (see Table 1 in Chapter 3). The results revealed significant differences between the emerging adult and adult samples for gender [$X^2 (1, N = 482) = 15.09, p < .001$], education level [$X^2 (4, N = 482) = 85.65, p < .001$], number of participants in a relationship [$X^2 (2, N = 480) = 39.24, p < .001$], and relationship status [$X^2 (2, N = 481) = 31.73, p < .001$]. Overall the results revealed that the emerging adult sample had significantly more women than men compared to the adult sample, and the adult sample had significantly more men than women compared to the emerging adult sample. Adults had significantly more people with Bachelor’s and advanced degrees than emerging adults. Adults also had a significantly higher percentage of participants in a relationship, than emerging adults.
Lastly, emerging adults had significantly more participants who were dating multiple people and who were unsure if they were in a relationship than adults.

Next, I conducted five 2x2 Multivariate Analyses (MANOVAs) to determine if there were any significant differences between the two samples or between men and women on their use of the hypothesized information sources and the relationship awareness variables. The first 2x2 MANOVA examined differences in the use of cognitive information. The results revealed no significant interaction between developmental stage and gender [Wilks’ λ = .99, F (3, 470) = 1.71, p = .17, partial η² = .01] indicating that gender did not vary across the samples. Main effects revealed significant differences between the two samples [Wilks’ λ = .92, F (3, 470) = 14.45, p < .001, partial η² = .08]. However, there were no significant main effects for gender [Wilks’ λ = 1.00, F (6, 940) = 0.22, p = .97, partial η² = .00].

The second 2x2 MANOVA examined potential differences between the two samples on emotion-based information. Similar to the previous analysis, the results revealed a non-significant gender x developmental stage interaction [Wilks’ λ = 1.00, F (3, 470) = .38, p = .69, partial η² = .00] indicating that there were no gender differences across developmental stages. However the results did reveal a significant main effect indicating differences between the two samples [Wilks’ λ = .87, F (2, 429) = 33.45, p < .001, partial η² = .14]. There was no significant main effect for gender [Wilks’ λ = .99, F (4, 858) = 0.22, p = .35, partial η² = .00].

The third 2x2 MANOVA examined differences for social network information. The results revealed a non-significant gender x developmental stage interaction [Wilks’ λ = .99, F (9, 463) = .56, p = .83, partial η² = .01] indicating that there were no gender
differences across developmental stages. The results did reveal significant main effects between the two samples [Wilks’ \(\lambda = .92\), \(F (9, 463) = 4.73, p < .001\), partial \(\eta^2 = .08\)], but again there were no significant main effects for gender [Wilks’ \(\lambda = .96\), \(F (18, 926) = 1.12, p = .33\), partial \(\eta^2 = .02\)].

The fourth 2x2 MANOVA revealed a non-significant gender x developmental stage interaction [Wilks’ \(\lambda = 1.00\), \(F (2, 368) = .08, p = .92\), partial \(\eta^2 = .00\)] indicating that there were no gender differences across developmental stages. The results did reveal significant main effect for developmental stage indicating a difference between the samples in their use of behavioral information [Wilks’ \(\lambda = .97\), \(F (2, 368) = 5.97, p < .01\), partial \(\eta^2 = .03\)]. There were no significant main effects for gender [Wilks’ \(\lambda = 1.00\), \(F (2, 368) = .64, p = .53\), partial \(\eta^2 = .00\)].

Lastly, the fifth 2x2 MANOVA revealed a non-significant gender x developmental stage interaction [Wilks’ \(\lambda = 1.00\), \(F (6, 413) = .33, p = .92\), partial \(\eta^2 = .01\)] indicating that there were no gender differences across developmental stages. The results did reveal a significant main effect for developmental stage indicating that the participant responses on the relationship awareness variables varied significantly across samples [Wilks’ \(\lambda = .91\), \(F (6, 413) = 6.65, p < .001\), partial \(\eta^2 = .09\)]. Similar to the previous analyses, there were no significant main effects for gender [Wilks’ \(\lambda = .96\), \(F (12, 826) = 1.30, p = .21\), partial \(\eta^2 = .02\)]. Given that the MANOVA analyses showed significant differences between the emerging adult and adult samples, separate SEM models were conducted for the full sample, the emerging adult sample, and the adult sample. Conversely, since there were no significant gender differences, gender effects were not examined in the main analyses.
Preliminary Analyses

Prior to conducting the main analyses, I examined the means, standard deviations, and Cronbach’s alpha’s for all of the study variables (see Table 2 at the end of Chapter 3). Examination of the variables indicated that the means were all within the specified range for each variable. Additionally, all of the means were within two standard deviations suggesting that overall that the measures were generally normally distributed. Additionally, all of the scales used in the study exhibited good to excellent reliability. All of the scales had Cronbach’s alphas of .75 or higher, with a majority of the scales displaying Cronbach’s alpha’s of .80 or above.

Next, Pearson correlations among relational uncertainty, information sources and relationship awareness outcome variables, as well as correlations between information sources and the relationship awareness outcome variables were examined for the full, emerging adult and adult samples (See Tables 3a-11c). Overall, self, partner, and relationship uncertainty were significantly correlated with the use of the information sources (cognition, emotions, social network, and behaviors), providing preliminary support for the study hypothesis. Additionally, correlations examining the relationship between the information sources and the relationship awareness variables were generally significant. The results of the correlations are as follows:

**Relational Uncertainty and Cognition**

The results of the correlations showed that relationship uncertainty was significantly associated with increased use of the cognitive information sources. The results reveal that the more uncertain people are about their relationships (indicated by lower scores on the uncertainty measures) the more likely they were to engage in
cognitive information seeking. As predicted in the study hypothesis, the results suggest that people are motivated to engage in cognitive information seeking during times of relational uncertainty. The results of the correlations are presented in Tables 3a, 3b, and 3c.

Table 3a. Correlations Examining the Association Between Relationals Uncertainty and Cognitive Information - Full Sample.

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<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
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<td>2. Self Uncertainty</td>
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<td>-</td>
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<td>3. Relationship Uncertainty</td>
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<td>.82*</td>
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<td>4. Partner Ideal</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Relationship Ideal Discrepancy</td>
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<td>-.68*</td>
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<td>.68*</td>
<td>.78*</td>
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</table>

* Indicates a significant correlation (p < .001)

Table 3b. Correlations Examining the Association Between Relational Uncertainty and Cognitive Information - Emerging Adults.

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<tr>
<td>2. Self Uncertainty</td>
<td>.77*</td>
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<td>5. Relational Scripts</td>
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<td>-.62*</td>
<td>-.57*</td>
<td>.59*</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Relationship Ideal Discrepancy</td>
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<td>-.68*</td>
<td>-.65*</td>
<td>.68*</td>
<td>.76*</td>
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</table>

* Indicates a significant correlation (p < .001)

Table 3c. Correlations Examining the Association Between Relational Uncertainty and Cognitive Information - Adult.

<table>
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<th>Variable</th>
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<td>2. Self Uncertainty</td>
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<td>-</td>
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<td>-.60*</td>
<td>-.65*</td>
<td>.58*</td>
<td>.79*</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

* Indicates a significant correlation (p < .001)

Relational Uncertainty and Emotions

The results of the correlations also indicated that relational uncertainty was significantly associated with increased use of the emotion-based information sources.
Consistent with uncertainty reduction theory, relational uncertainty was negatively associated with positive emotions and positively associated with negative emotions. The results indicate that the more uncertain people are about their relationships (indicated by lower scores on the uncertainty measures) the more likely they were to engage in emotion-based information seeking. As predicted in the study hypothesis, the results suggest that people are motivated to engage in emotion-based information seeking during times of uncertainty. The results of the correlations are presented in Tables 4a, 4b, and 4c.

**Table 4a. Correlations Examining the Association Between Relational Uncertainty and Emotion-Based Information - Full Sample.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
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<td>2. Self Uncertainty</td>
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<td>3. Relationship Uncertainty</td>
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<td>.82*</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Positive Emotions</td>
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<td>-.58*</td>
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<td>5. Negative Emotions</td>
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</table>

* Indicates a significant correlation ($p < .001$)

**Table 4b. Correlations Examining the Association Between Relational Uncertainty and Emotion-Based Information - Emerging Adults.**

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<th>Variable</th>
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<td>2. Self Uncertainty</td>
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<td>3. Relationship Uncertainty</td>
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<td>.80*</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Positive Emotions</td>
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<td>-.59*</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Negative Emotions</td>
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<td>.30*</td>
<td>.26*</td>
<td>-.33*</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

* Indicates a significant correlation ($p < .001$)


Table 4c. Correlations Examining the Association Between Relational Uncertainty and Emotion-Based Information - Adult.

<table>
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<tr>
<td>4. Positive Emotions</td>
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<td>.36*</td>
<td>-.40*</td>
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</table>

** Indicates a significant correlation (p < .001)

Relational Uncertainty and Social Networks

Tables 5a, 5b, and 5c, reveal that relationship uncertainty was significantly associated with increased use of the social network information. The results indicate that the more uncertain people are about their relationships (indicated by lower scores on the uncertainty measures) the more likely they were to engage in social network information seeking. The only exception was that the correlations between normative beliefs and perceptions of social approval from participants’ partner’s family and friends, as these correlations were not significant for the full sample and emerging adults. Overall as predicted in the study hypothesis, the results suggest that people are motivated to seek information from their social networks during times of relational uncertainty.

Relational Uncertainty and Behaviors

The results showed that relationship uncertainty was significantly associated with increased use of the self and partner behaviors. The results are negatively correlated so that the more uncertain people are about their relationships the more likely they were to engage in behavioral information seeking. The results of the correlations for behavioral information sources are presented in Tables 6a, 6b, and 6c.
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<td>10. Network Overlap</td>
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<td>11. Network View as Perfect Couple</td>
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<td>12. Network Encouragement/Discouragement</td>
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* Indicates a significant correlation (p < .001)

**Table 5a. Correlations Examining the Association Between Relational Uncertainty and Social Network Information - Full Sample.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
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<td>11. Network View as Perfect Couple</td>
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* Indicates a significant correlation (p < .05); ** indicates a significant correlation (p < .01); *** indicates a significant correlation (p < .001).
### Table 5c. Correlations Examining the Association Between Relational Uncertainty and Social Network Information - Adult.

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* indicates a significant correlation (p < .05); ** indicates a significant correlation (p < .01); *** indicates a significant correlation (p < .001).

### Table 6a. Correlations Examining the Association Between Uncertainty and Perceived Use of the Behavioral Indicators of Commitment (Self and Partner) - Full Sample.

<table>
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* Indicates a significant correlation (p < .001)
Table 6b. Correlations Examining the Association Relational Between Uncertainty and perceived use of the Behavioral Indicators of Commitment (self and partner) - Emerging Adults.

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* indicates a significant correlation (p < .001)

Table 6c. Correlations Examining the Association Relational Between Uncertainty and perceived use of the Behavioral Indicators of Commitment (self and partner) - Adult.

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* indicates a significant correlation (p < .001)

Relational Uncertainty and Relationship Awareness

As for relationship awareness, the correlations revealed that relationship uncertainty was significantly associated with increases in the relationship awareness outcome variables. The results are negatively correlated so that the more uncertain people are about their relationships, the more likely they were to become aware of their relationship status as measured by the relationship awareness outcome variables. The results of the correlations for the relationship awareness outcome variables are presented in Tables 7a, 7b, and 7c.
Cognition and Relationship Awareness

The results also revealed that the use of cognitive information sources was significantly associated with increases in the relationship awareness outcome variables. Thus, the results are consistent with the hypothesized model presented in Figure 2. The results of the correlations for cognitive information sources are presented in Tables 7a, 8a, and 8c.

### Table 7b. Correlations Examining the Association Between Predictor and Outcome Variables - Emerging Adult Sample

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* Indicates a significant correlation (p < .001)

### Table 7a. Correlations Examining the Association Between Predictor and Outcome Variables - Full Sample

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* Indicates a significant correlation (p < .001)

### Table 7c. Correlations Examining the Association Between Predictor and Outcome Variables - Adult Sample

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* Indicates a significant correlation (p < .001)
Emotions and Relationship Awareness

As shown in Tables 9a, 9b, and 9c, the use of emotion-based information sources was significantly associated with increases in the relationship awareness outcome variables. Positive emotions were positively associated with the relationship awareness outcome variables, while negative emotions were negatively associated with relationship awareness. Thus, the results are consistent with the hypothesized model presented in Figure 2.

Table 8b. Correlations Examining the Association Between Cognitive Information and Outcome Variables. - Emerging Adult Sample

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* indicates a significant correlation (p < .001)

Table 8c. Correlations Examining the Association Between Cognitive Information and Outcome Variables. - Adult Sample

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* indicates a significant correlation (p < .01); ** indicates a significant correlation (p < .001)
Table 9a. Correlations Examining the Association Between Emotion-Based Information and Outcome Variables. - Full Sample

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* Indicates a significant correlation (p < .001)

Table 9b. Correlations Examining the Association Between Emotion-Based Information and Outcome Variables. - Emerging Adult Sample

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* Indicates a significant correlation (p < .001)

Table 9c. Correlations Examining the Association Between Emotion-Based Information and Outcome Variables. - Adult Sample

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* Indicates a significant correlation (p < .01); ** Indicates a significant correlation (p < .001)

Social Networks and Relationship Awareness

The correlations indicated that the use of social network information sources was significantly associated with increases in the relationship awareness outcome variables.

However there were a few exceptions. The correlations between communal strength and perceived approval from the participants’ family and friends for the full and the emerging adult samples were non-significant. Additionally, results for adults revealed a non-significant correlation between communal strength and perceived approval from their
family. Lastly, the results for emerging adults revealed a non-significant correlation between relationship centrality and approval from participant’s friends. Overall, the results are consistent with the hypothesized model presented in Figure 2. The results of the correlations for social network information sources are presented below in Tables 10a, 10b, and 10c.

Behaviors and Relationship Awareness

The use of behavioral information sources was significantly correlated with increases in the relationship awareness outcome variables, and the results are consistent with the hypothesized model presented in Figure 2. The results of the correlations for the behavioral information sources are presented in Tables 11a, 11b, and 11c.

In summary, the results of the Pearson correlations in this section were consistent with the conceptual model I proposed in Chapter 2. Overall, the first set of correlations revealed a significant correlation between relational uncertainty and use of the information sources, which is consistent with URT. The second set of correlations also overall demonstrated a significant relationship between the information seeking variables and the relationship awareness variables. Thus, despite a few non-significant results, overall the results of these correlations provide preliminary support for the conceptual model presented in Figure 2.

Confirmatory Factor Analyses

Before conducting the main analyses, I conducted four preliminary Confirmatory Factor Analyses (CFAs) to ensure that the latent variables (uncertainty appraisal, cognitive information,
Table 10a. Correlations Examining the Association Between Social Network Information and Outcome Variables. - Full Sample.

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* Indicates a significant correlation (p < .05); ** Indicates a significant correlation (p < .01); *** Indicates a significant correlation (p < .001)
**Table 10b. Correlations Examining the Association Between Social Network Information and Outcome Variables. - Emerging Adults.**

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* Indicates a significant correlation (p < .05); ** Indicates a significant correlation (p < .01); *** Indicates a significant correlation (p < .001)
### Table 10c. Correlations Examining the Association Between Social Network Information and Outcome Variables. - Adults.

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* Indicates a significant correlation (p < .05); ** Indicates a significant correlation (p < .01); *** Indicates a significant correlation (p < .001)
and social network information, and relationship awareness) demonstrated construct
validity and adequate model fit. I retained items with factor loadings over .50 as
recommended by Mertler and Vannatta (2005). I evaluated model fit using established fit
indicators such as non-significant chi-square (Kline, 2011), root mean square error of

### Table 11a. Correlations Examining the Association Between Behavioral Information and Outcome Variables. - Full Sample

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* Indicates a significant correlation (p < .001)

### Table 11b. Correlations Examining the Association Between Behavioral Information and Outcome Variables. - Emerging Adult Sample

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* Indicates a significant correlation (p < .001)

### Table 11c. Correlations Examining the Association Between Behavioral Information and Outcome Variables. - Adult Sample

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* Indicates a significant correlation (p < .01); ** Indicates a significant correlation (p < .001)
approximation (RMSEA; with values between below .08 for adequate fit; Browne & Cudeck, 1993), the comparative fit index (CFI; values over .90; Kline, 2011), and the Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI; values over .90; West, Taylor, & Wu, 2012). As mentioned previously, chi-square is considered to be unreliable in highly powered samples (Hoyle, 2012). In such cases I report the chi-square, but relied upon the other fit statistics, as recommended by (West, Taylor, & Wu, 2012). Modification indices that fit within the theoretical parameters of the hypothesized model were used to determine which parts of the model needed to be modified to improve model fit. The CFA results for the uncertainty appraisal and social network information CFAs are listed in Tables 12a-12c.

The first CFA examined the latent construct of uncertainty appraisal. The results of the uncertainty appraisal CFAs are located in Tables 12a-12c. In my initial analyses relational uncertainty and relationship goals resulted in just identified models ($\chi^2 = 0, p = .000$, RMSEA = .00, CFI = 1.00, and TLI = 1.00) indicating that there is no difference between the models and the saturated models (known parameters = unknown parameters); therefore fit statistics are not applicable for these models (Kenny & Milan, 2012). No further modifications could be conducted as the best model fit had been achieved. Additionally, the relational goals latent variable, which I had originally proposed, seemed to be predicted by the relational uncertainty variable, which suggested that the relational goals and uncertainty were possibly explaining the same latent variable. I conducted a CFA to test this relationship and found that the model had excellent fit and appears to be capturing the latent nature of uncertainty appraisals as I described in Chapter 2. To ensure the best possible chance for model conversion in the main analyses, I collapsed the relational uncertainty variables (self, partner, and
relationship uncertainty) into one variable called relational uncertainty. The results of the initial CFA for the full sample resulted in poor fit, $\chi^2 = 22.50$, $p < .001$, RMSEA = .15, CFI = .98, and TLI = .94. The modification indices recommended accounting for the negative covariance between negative between participants’ goal for a long-term versus short-term relationship goal and relational uncertainty. The correlation was added to the model and model fit was achieved. Similarly, the emerging adult sample showed a somewhat comparable pattern. The initial CFA fit statistics for the emerging adult sample was $\chi^2 = 17.26$, $p < .001$, RMSEA = .17, CFI = .97, and TLI = .92. Modification indices suggested accounting for the covariance between the romantic feelings goal and relational uncertainty. The correlation was added and I re-ran the model. The second run decreased fit in RMSEA and TLI, but improved chi-square and CFI. The fit statistic for the new model was $\chi^2 = 10.65$, $p = .001$, RMSEA = .19, CFI = .98, and TLI = .90. The final modification indices suggested in accounting for the correlation between long term versus short-term relationship goal and relational uncertainty. The correlation was added and I re-ran the model, which resulted in a just identified model. No further modifications could be conducted as the best model fit had been achieved. Finally, the initial CFA for the adult sample resulted in excellent model fit. The fit statistic for the adult model was $\chi^2 = 2.14$, $p = .34$, RMSEA = .02, CFI = 1.00, and TLI = .99. The modification indices reported no additional modifications for this model.

The second CFA examined the cognitive information sources latent variable. The cognitive information latent variable demonstrated high construct validity with factor loadings of .63 or higher. In terms of model fit, the models for all three samples $\chi^2 = 0$, indicating that the models were just identified. Since the models were just identified no
Further analyses could be conducted and the model would be used as is. The factor loadings for the full sample were .72 for partner ideal, .93 for relationship ideal, and .84 for relationship scripts. The factor loadings for the emerging adult sample were .73 for partner ideal, .94 for relationship ideal, and .81 for relationship scripts. Lastly, the factor loadings for the adult sample were .73 for partner ideal, .94 for relationship ideal, and .81 for relationship scripts.

The third CFA examined the latent variable social network information. Final results of the social network information CFAs are located in Table 12a-12c. The results of the initial CFA for the full sample resulted in poor fit, $\chi^2 = 167.72 \ p < .001$, RMSEA = .15, CFI = .93, and TLI = .90. The modification indices suggested that I account for a correlation between the item “social network view as a perfect couple who should marry someday” and the item measuring perceived social network encouragement/discouragement to improve the model fit. The correlation was added and I re-ran the model. Model fit improved $\chi^2 = 124.36 \ p < .001$, RMSEA = .13, CFI = .95, and TLI = .92. The process was repeated several times as correlations were added one at a time until the best possible model fit was achieved. Next, I ran a CFA for the emerging adult sample. The fit statistics for the emerging adult sample were $\chi^2 = 112.45 \ p < .001$, RMSEA = .16, CFI = .92, and TLI = .88. Modification indices suggested accounting for a correlation between the item “social network view as a perfect couple who should marry someday” and the inclusion of social network item (IOSN). The correlation was added and I re-ran the model. Model fit improved $\chi^2 = 72.24 \ p < .001$, RMSEA = .13, CFI = .95, and TLI = .92. Once again, this process was repeated several times as correlations were added one at a time until the best possible fit was achieved. Finally, I ran a CFA for the
adult sample. Initial fit statistics for the adult sample were $\chi^2 = 78.41$, $p < .001$, RMSEA = .15, CFI = .94, and TLI = .91. The modification indices suggested that I account for a correlation between the item “social network view as a perfect couple who should marry someday” and the item measuring perceived social network encouragement/discouragement to improve the model fit. The correlation was added and I re-ran the model. Model fit improved $\chi^2 = 49.86$, $p < .001$, RMSEA = .11, CFI = .97, and TLI = .94. The process was repeated several times as correlations were added one at a time until the best possible model fit was achieved.

Lastly, the fourth CFA examined the latent construct of relationship awareness. The CFA results yielded a two-factor solution. However, when I ran the latent variables during the main analyses, the models failed to converge. To deal with this issue, instead of using latent variables, I included the relationship awareness variables as individual observed variables in each SEM model.

**Main Analyses**

Structural equation modeling was used to address Research Questions 1-3. First, this section will present results for the full model (see Figure at the end of Chapter 2). The results will be presented for the full sample as well as the emerging adult and adult samples. Next, this section will discuss the results relevant to Research Question 1 [To what degree does the use of the information sources account for the total level of relationship awareness (as measured by $R^2$)?]. Then, the section will address Research Question 2 [Are one or more of the information sources more strongly associated with relationship awareness (as measured by standardized estimates of the parameters in a
structural model)?]. Lastly, the section will address Research Question 3 (To what degree do the information sources mediate the association between uncertainty and awareness?).

Initially, I started to work on the full model, depicted in Figure 2, using the full sample (adults and emerging adults together). However, when I ran the full model as proposed, the model failed to converge. In order to deal with this issue I removed all of the paths that were input with the exception of the paths leading from social network information, which was chosen arbitrarily. This modified model would serve as my starting point for the model. The initial model displayed poor model fit \( \chi^2 = 2437.10 \, p < .001, \) RMSEA = .13, CFI = .80, and TLI = .78. Although all of the paths were statistically significant. Modification indices indicated numerous correlations, and potential paths to improve model fit. Paths were chosen based upon conceptual logic, and were added one at a time to ensure that the new paths improved model fit. The first modification entered was a correlation between inclusion of other within the self and inclusion of other within the self–partner. Adding the correlation improved the model fit slightly \( \chi^2 = 2245.24 \, p < .001, \) RMSEA = .13, CFI = .83, and TLI = .81. Modification indices for correlations and paths were entered iteratively one by one, and were repeated until the best possible fit was achieved. Additionally, as new paths were added some older paths became non-significant and were removed. A list of co-variances for the full model can be found in Table 14a.

The final model showed excellent fit \( \chi^2 = 600.10 \, p < .001, \) RMSEA = .06, CFI = .96, and TLI = .95. As can be seen in Figure 3a, the results indicated that uncertainty appraisals led to information seeking for all of the information sources. Results also indicated that cognitive information significantly predicted relationship centrality,
inclusion of other within the self, and inclusion of other within the self – partner. Social network information predicted inclusion of other within the self – partner, other perspective taking, self-perspective taking, and communal strength. Positive emotions significantly predicted self-perspective taking and communal strength, while negative emotions significantly predicted other perspective taking, self-perspective taking, and communal strength. Lastly, partner behaviors predicted other perspective taking, while self-behaviors predicted self-perspective taking and communal strength.

Once the full model with the full sample was complete, the model was used as a starting point to examine the emerging adult and adult samples separately. First, I examined the model for the emerging adult sample. The initial model fit was barely adequate \( \chi^2 = 276.63, p < .001, \) RMSEA = .08, CFI = .95, and TLI = .93. Modification indices also recommended adding some correlations as well as three new paths (cognitive information \( \rightarrow \) other perspective taking, positive emotions \( \rightarrow \) other perspective taking, and self behaviors \( \rightarrow \) relationship centrality). All of the paths and correlations were added (or deleted) iteratively one at a time. A list of co-variances for the emerging adult model can be found in Table 14b. Model fit for the final emerging adult model showed excellent fit \( \chi^2 = 411.39, p < .001, \) RMSEA = .06, CFI = .96, and TLI = .95. Results indicated that uncertainty appraisals led to information seeking for all of the information sources (see Figure 3b). Results also indicated that cognitive information predicted relationship centrality, inclusion of other within the self, and inclusion of other within the self – partner. Social network information predicted other perspective taking. Positive and negative emotions predicted other perspective taking, self-perspective taking, and communal strength. Lastly, partner behaviors predicted other perspective taking, while
self-behaviors predicted relationship centrality, self-perspective taking and communal strength.

Initial model fit for the adult sample was adequate [$\chi^2 = 452.64, p < .001$, RMSEA = .07, CFI = .94, and TLI = .92]. The results also showed that a couple of the paths were non-significant (positive emotion $\rightarrow$ self perspective taking, and negative emotion $\rightarrow$ communal strength), as well as a couple of correlations. Paths were removed (or added) one at a time. A list of co-variances for the adult model can be found in Table 14c. Further analyses resulted in the removal of two more paths (partner behavior $\rightarrow$ other perspective taking, social network information $\rightarrow$ communal strength, and positive emotion $\rightarrow$ communal strength). The fit for the final model for the adult sample was excellent [$\chi^2 = 403.04, p < .001$, RMSEA = .06, CFI = .95, and TLI = .94]. Similar to the other samples, results indicated that uncertainty appraisals led to information seeking for all of the information sources (see Figure 3c). Results also indicated that cognitive information significantly predicted relationship centrality, inclusion of other within the self, and inclusion of other within the self – partner. Social network information predicted inclusion of other within the self -partner, other perspective taking, self-perspective taking, and communal strength. Interestingly, positive emotions did not predict any of the relationship awareness outcome variables in the adult sample, while negative emotions significantly predicted other perspective taking and self-perspective taking. Lastly, partner behaviors did not predict any of the outcome variables, while self-behaviors predicted self-perspective taking and communal strength. It is also interesting to note that in addition to cognitive information sources, social network information also strongly impacted the relationship awareness outcomes variables.
Turning to the specific research questions, the SEM models explained almost all of the variance in each of the models, as $R^2$ for the full sample was .96 and $R^2$ for the Emerging adult and adult samples was .97 (Research Question 1). Although the models explained nearly all of the variance in the models, the results should be interpreted with caution. It might be tempting to conclude that the resulting $R^2$ results indicate that the final models in this study perfectly model the relationship awareness process, which would be incorrect. Imprecise measurement of the variables (which is attributable to all measures) in each of the models alone makes it unlikely that any of the final models in this study are near perfect representations of the relationship awareness process. Instead, the models are explaining nearly all of the variance created by the specific set of variables in the model.

In regards to Research Question 2, the use of the information sources during information seeking was fairly even across all three samples. However, cognitive information sources appeared to have the greatest effect on the relationship awareness outcome variables for all three samples. All of the remaining information sources had a relatively equal impact on the relationship awareness outcome variables (see Figures 3a and 3c). However, for emerging adults, self-behaviors and negative emotions also had a large impact on the relationship awareness outcome variables, albeit less than the cognitive information sources (see Figure 3b).

Lastly, to explore Research Question 3, mediation was tested using the `teffects` command in STATA, which is part of the SEM package and reports the mediation effects (direct, indirect, and total effects) within the structural model. Although the `teffects` command does not require bootstrapping, it does report the confidence intervals for the
mediation effects. Results for all three samples revealed significant indirect mediation effects between uncertainty appraisal and the relationship awareness variables (see Tables 13a-13c). In other words, there were only indirect mediation effects as no direct effects were found.

Overall, the results of the mediation analyses revealed that use of the four information sources mediated the relationship between uncertainty appraisals and the relationship awareness outcome variables. For the full sample, cognitive information mediated the relationship between relationship uncertainty appraisals and relationship centrality, inclusion of other within the self, and inclusion of other within the self – partner. Social network information mediated the relationship between relationship uncertainty appraisals and inclusion of other within the self – partner, other perspective taking, self-perspective taking, and communal strength. Positive emotions mediated the relationship between appraisals and self-perspective taking, and relationship uncertainty and communal strength. Negative emotions mediated the relationship between relationship uncertainty appraisal and other perspective taking, self-perspective taking, and communal strength. Partner behaviors mediated the relationship between relationship uncertainty appraisals and other perspective taking, while self-behaviors mediated the relationship between relationship uncertainty appraisals and self-perspective taking, and uncertainty appraisals and communal strength.

Comparatively, for the emerging sample, cognitive information mediated the relationship between relationship uncertainty appraisals and relationship centrality, inclusion of other within the self, and inclusion of other within the self – partner. Social network information only mediated the relationship between relationship uncertainty uncertainty
appraisals and other perspective taking. Positive and negative emotions mediated the relationship between appraisals and other perspective taking, self-perspective taking, and communal strength. Once again, partner behaviors mediated the relationship between relationship uncertainty appraisals and other perspective taking, while self-behaviors mediated the relationship between relationship uncertainty appraisals and relationship centrality, self-perspective taking, and communal strength.

Lastly, for the adult sample, cognitive information once again mediated the relationship between relationship uncertainty appraisals and relationship centrality, inclusion of other within the self, and inclusion of other within the self – partner. Like the full sample, social network information mediated the relationship between relationship uncertainty appraisals and inclusion of other within the self – partner, other perspective taking, self-perspective taking, and communal strength. Negative emotions mediated the relationship between relationship uncertainty appraisal and other perspective taking, and uncertainty appraisal and self-perspective taking. Similar to the full sample, self-behaviors mediated the relationship between relationship uncertainty appraisals and self-perspective taking, and uncertainty appraisals and communal strength. Lastly, positive emotions and partner behaviors did not have any mediating effects.

**Follow up analyses**

Given that differences between samples were found I decided to run follow up analyses to see if there were any changes in the models if I removed the participants who were not currently in a relationship. A few differences were found in the full and emerging adult samples. In all three samples some of the co-variances in the main analyses were no longer significant, thus the non-significant co-variances were removed
one at a time. The results of the follow up analysis for the full sample resulted in the removal of the path from social network information to communal strength. No other changes were made to the full model. Model fit for the full sample was similar to the model fit in the main analysis \[\chi^2 = 513.86, p < .001, \text{RMSEA} = .06, \text{CFI} = .96, \text{and TLI} = .94\]. Comparatively for the emerging adult sample, the results of the follow up analysis resulted in the removal of the path from self-behaviors to relationship centrality. No other changes were made to the emerging adult model. The model fit for the emerging adult model was fairly similar to the main analysis \[\chi^2 = 376.20, p < .001, \text{RMSEA} = .06, \text{CFI} = .95, \text{and TLI} = .94\]. The results of the follow up analyses of the adult model revealed no changes from the main analyses. Additionally, with the exception of the removed paths in the full and emerging adult models, there were no changes in the mediation results from the main analyses.

**Summary of Results**

In summary, the hypothesized structural model was generally supported, albeit with a few slight modifications. Overall, information seeking predicted more of the relationship awareness outcome variables for emerging adults, compared to adults and the full sample, as can be seen by the larger number of paths leading to the relationship awareness outcome variables from the information source variables. In contrast, although adults engaged in information seeking across all of the information seeking variables, not all of the information sources significantly predicted the relationship awareness outcome variables, as positive emotions and partner behaviors did not influence any of the relationship awareness outcome variables.
As for the specific study hypothesis and research questions, the hypothesis (Higher levels of uncertainty will be associated with higher use of the four information sources.) was supported. Pearson correlations revealed the relational uncertainty (self, partner, and relationship) was significantly correlated with the information source variables, with the exception of information source variables measuring participants’ perceived social approval from their family and friends. In addition, analysis of $R^2$ revealed that the final models for the relationship models explained nearly all of the variance in the relationship awareness process as proposed in the full model, as all three models explained 96% of the variance or greater (Research Question 1). Furthermore, the SEM analyses revealed that cognitive information had the most impact on relationship awareness outcome variables for the full and adult samples. In addition, for emerging adults, self-behaviors also had a large impact on relationship awareness, and social information was very influential for adults (Research Question 2). Lastly, in all three models the information sources significantly mediated the relationship between uncertainty appraisals and relationship awareness. The total effects indicate the relative strength of each mediating relationship, compared to other mediating relationships. In this study, the total effects in all three models indicated that all of the mediated paths influenced relationship awareness fairly equally. Moreover, the mediating relationships were all indirect, as there were no direct effects between uncertainty appraisals and any of the relationship awareness outcome variables in all three models (Research Question 3). The lack of indirect effects indicates that the information sources completely mediate the relationship between uncertainty appraisals and relationship awareness. This is not the same thing as saying the model implies full mediation, a term coined by Baron and
Kenny (1986). Full mediation implies that all of the mediating variables are accounted for in a model (Hayes, 2014), and although I know of no other information sources that might influence relationship awareness, the results of this study do not present evidence that the mediators used in this study are exhaustive.
Table 12a. Table of CFA results for the Uncertainty Appraisal and Social Network Information latent variables - full sample.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Latent variable and indicators</th>
<th>Factor Loading</th>
<th>$\chi^2$</th>
<th>RMSEA</th>
<th>CFI</th>
<th>TLI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Uncertainty Appraisal</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.15 ($p = .70$)</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long term versus short term relationship goal</td>
<td>.79</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desires for Romantic Relationship</td>
<td>.93</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romantic Feelings</td>
<td>.82</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relational Uncertainty</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social Network Information</strong></td>
<td>8.58 ($p = .38$)</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>.999</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partner Family Approval</td>
<td>.70</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partner Friends Approval</td>
<td>.76</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Normative Beliefs</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social network encourage/discourage</td>
<td>.71</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Network sees couple as perfect couple who should get married</td>
<td>.74</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Network Overlap</td>
<td>.88</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IOSN</td>
<td>.81</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. The latent variable is listed in bold, and the indicators are listed underneath each latent variable.
Table 12b. *Table of CFA results for the Uncertainty Appraisal and Social Network Information latent variables - emerging adult sample.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Latent variable and indicators</th>
<th>Factor Loading</th>
<th>$\chi^2$</th>
<th>RMSEA</th>
<th>CFI</th>
<th>TLI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Uncertainty Appraisal</strong></td>
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<td>0.00 ($p = .00$)</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long term versus short-term relationship goal</td>
<td>.81</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desires for Romantic Relationship</td>
<td>.93</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romantic Feelings</td>
<td>.79</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relational Uncertainty</td>
<td>-.58</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social Network Information</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>7.61 ($p = .57$)</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partner Family Approval</td>
<td>.66</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partner Friends Approval</td>
<td>.76</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Normative Beliefs</td>
<td>.81</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social network encourage/discourage</td>
<td>.67</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Network sees couple as perfect couple who should get married</td>
<td>.73</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Network Overlap</td>
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<td>IOSN</td>
<td>.78</td>
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*Note.* The latent variable is listed in bold, and the indicators are listed underneath each latent variable.
Table 12c. *Table of CFA results for the Uncertainty Appraisal and Social Network Information latent variables - adult sample.*

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Latent variable and indicators</th>
<th>Factor Loadings</th>
<th>$\chi^2$</th>
<th>RMSEA</th>
<th>CFI</th>
<th>TLI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Uncertainty Appraisal</strong></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long term versus short-term relationship goal</td>
<td>.71</td>
<td>2.14 ($p = .34$)</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>.999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desires for Romantic Relationship</td>
<td>.91</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romantic Feelings</td>
<td>.84</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relational Uncertainty</td>
<td>-.66</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social Network Information</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partner Family Approval</td>
<td>.64</td>
<td>18.05 ($p = .04$)</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.99</td>
<td>.98</td>
</tr>
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<td>Partner Friends Approval</td>
<td>.72</td>
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<td>Normative Beliefs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Social network encourage/discourage</td>
<td>.70</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Network sees couple as perfect couple who should get married</td>
<td>.73</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Network Overlap</td>
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<tr>
<td>IOSN</td>
<td>.86</td>
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</table>

*Note.* The latent variable is listed in bold, and the indicators are listed underneath each latent variable.
Figure 3a. SEM model – Full Sample. Relationship uncertainty appraisals predicted information seeking, which in turn predicted the various relationship awareness outcome variables. The coefficients in parentheses are unstandardized. *** = p < .001; ** = p < .01; * = p < .05.
**Figure 3b.** SEM model – Emerging Adult Sample. Relationship uncertainty appraisals predicted information seeking, which in turn predicted the various relationship awareness outcome variables. Coefficients in parentheses are unstandardized. *** = p < .001; ** = p < .01; * = p < .05.
**Figure 3c.** SEM model – Adult Sample. Relationship uncertainty appraisals predicted information seeking, which in turn predicted the various relationship awareness outcome variables. Notably, although adults did engage in information seeking among all of the information sources, they did not rely on positive emotions or perceptions of partner’s behavior to become aware of their relationship status. Coefficients in parentheses are unstandardized. *** = $p < .001$; ** = $p < .01$; * = $p < .05$.
Table 13a. *Results of mediation analyses for information sources on uncertainty appraisal and relationship awareness - Full Sample.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome Variable</th>
<th>Total effect</th>
<th>Indirect Effect (axb)</th>
<th>CI Lower Limit</th>
<th>CI Upper Limit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Relationship Centrality</strong></td>
<td>.62</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive information</td>
<td>.62 (1.81)</td>
<td>.56 (1.52)</td>
<td>.67 (2.09)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>IOS</strong></td>
<td>.62</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive information</td>
<td>.61 (1.34)</td>
<td>.55 (1.13)</td>
<td>.67 (1.57)</td>
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<td><strong>IOSP</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Cognitive information</td>
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<td>.58 (1.34)</td>
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<td>Social Network Information</td>
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<td>.04 (.09)</td>
<td>.28 (.63)</td>
<td></td>
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<td><strong>ODPT</strong></td>
<td>.68</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Partner Behaviors</td>
<td>.14 (.22)</td>
<td>.06 (.10)</td>
<td>.22 (.34)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative Emotions</td>
<td>.20 (.32)</td>
<td>.16 (.24)</td>
<td>.24 (.40)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Network Information</td>
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<td>.26 (.39)</td>
<td>.42 (.68)</td>
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<td><strong>SDPT</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self Behaviors</td>
<td>.24 (.36)</td>
<td>.17 (.25)</td>
<td>.30 (.47)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative Emotions</td>
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<td>.08 (.11)</td>
<td>.15 (.24)</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Positive Emotions</td>
<td>.10 (.15)</td>
<td>.03 (.05)</td>
<td>.17 (.26)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Network Information</td>
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<td>.11 (.17)</td>
<td>.30 (.47)</td>
<td></td>
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<td><strong>Communal Strength</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Self Behaviors</td>
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<td>.25 (.44)</td>
<td>.39 (.75)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative Emotions</td>
<td>.06 (.12)</td>
<td>.03 (.05)</td>
<td>.10 (.19)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive Emotions</td>
<td>.13 (.24)</td>
<td>.06 (.09)</td>
<td>.20 (.38)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Network Information</td>
<td>.11 (.21)</td>
<td>.01 (.02)</td>
<td>.22 (.41)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Outcome variables are listed in **bold.** Mediators are listed under each of the outcome variables. Only significant mediators are listed. Coefficients and confidence intervals in parentheses are unstandardized. All results are significant within a 95% confidence interval.
Table 13b. Results of mediation analyses for information sources on uncertainty appraisal and relationship awareness – Emerging Adult sample.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome Variable</th>
<th>Total effect</th>
<th>Indirect Effect ((axb))</th>
<th>CI Lower Limit</th>
<th>CI Upper Limit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Relationship Centrality</td>
<td>.62</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self Behaviors</td>
<td>.13 (.35)</td>
<td>.03 (.07)</td>
<td>.23 (.63)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive information</td>
<td>.49 (1.34)</td>
<td>.36 (.91)</td>
<td>.62 (1.76)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IOS</td>
<td>.60</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive information</td>
<td>.60 (1.28)</td>
<td>.52 (.99)</td>
<td>.68 (1.56)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IOSP</td>
<td>.62</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive information</td>
<td>.62 (1.34)</td>
<td>.55 (1.05)</td>
<td>.70 (1.63)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ODPT</td>
<td>.64</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partner Behaviors</td>
<td>.15 (.20)</td>
<td>.05 (.06)</td>
<td>.25 (.34)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative Emotions</td>
<td>.16 (.22)</td>
<td>.11 (.13)</td>
<td>.22 (.31)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive Emotions</td>
<td>.14 (.19)</td>
<td>.06 (.07)</td>
<td>.22 (.31)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Network Information</td>
<td>.18 (.25)</td>
<td>.07 (.09)</td>
<td>.30 (.41)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SDPT</td>
<td>.58</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self Behaviors</td>
<td>.27 (.39)</td>
<td>.19 (.26)</td>
<td>.35 (.53)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative Emotions</td>
<td>.08 (.12)</td>
<td>.04 (.05)</td>
<td>.12 (.18)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive Emotions</td>
<td>.23 (.33)</td>
<td>.15 (.20)</td>
<td>.31 (.46)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communal Strength</td>
<td>.58</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self Behaviors</td>
<td>.36 (.61)</td>
<td>.27 (.43)</td>
<td>.44 (.80)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative Emotions</td>
<td>.05 (.08)</td>
<td>.01 (.02)</td>
<td>.08 (.14)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive Emotions</td>
<td>.17 (.30)</td>
<td>.09 (.15)</td>
<td>.25 (.44)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Outcome variables are listed in **bold**. Mediators are listed under each of the outcome variables. Only significant mediators are listed. Coefficients and confidence intervals in parentheses are unstandardized. All results are significant within a 95% confidence interval.
Table 13c. Results of mediation analyses for information sources on uncertainty appraisal and relationship awareness - Adult sample.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome Variable</th>
<th>Total effect</th>
<th>Indirect Effect (axb)</th>
<th>CI Lower Limit</th>
<th>CI Upper Limit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Relationship Centrality</strong></td>
<td>.62</td>
<td>.62 (1.81)</td>
<td>.56 (1.52)</td>
<td>.67 (2.09)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive information</td>
<td>.62</td>
<td>.62 (1.81)</td>
<td>.56 (1.52)</td>
<td>.67 (2.09)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>IOS</strong></td>
<td>.61</td>
<td>.61 (1.35)</td>
<td>.55 (1.13)</td>
<td>.67 (1.57)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive information</td>
<td>.61</td>
<td>.61 (1.35)</td>
<td>.55 (1.13)</td>
<td>.67 (1.57)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>IOSP</strong></td>
<td>.60</td>
<td>.44 (1.00)</td>
<td>.31 (.67)</td>
<td>.58 (1.34)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive information</td>
<td>.44 (1.00)</td>
<td>.31 (.67)</td>
<td>.58 (1.34)</td>
<td>.28 (.63)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Network Information</td>
<td>.16 (.36)</td>
<td>.04 (.09)</td>
<td>.28 (.63)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ODPT</strong></td>
<td>.68</td>
<td>.20 (.32)</td>
<td>.16 (.24)</td>
<td>.24 (.40)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative Emotions</td>
<td>.20 (.32)</td>
<td>.16 (.24)</td>
<td>.24 (.40)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Network Information</td>
<td>.34 (.54)</td>
<td>.26 (.39)</td>
<td>.42 (.68)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SDPT</strong></td>
<td>.66</td>
<td>.24 (.36)</td>
<td>.17 (.25)</td>
<td>.30 (.47)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self Behaviors</td>
<td>.24 (.36)</td>
<td>.17 (.25)</td>
<td>.30 (.47)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative Emotions</td>
<td>.12 (.18)</td>
<td>.08 (.12)</td>
<td>.15 (.24)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Network Information</td>
<td>.21 (.32)</td>
<td>.11 (.17)</td>
<td>.30 (.47)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Communal Strength</strong></td>
<td>.62</td>
<td>.06 (.12)</td>
<td>.03 (.05)</td>
<td>.10 (.19)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative Emotions</td>
<td>.06 (.12)</td>
<td>.03 (.05)</td>
<td>.10 (.19)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Network Information</td>
<td>.11 (.22)</td>
<td>.01 (.20)</td>
<td>.22 (.41)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Outcome variables are listed in **bold**. Mediators are listed under each of the outcome variables. Only significant mediators are listed. Coefficients and confidence intervals in parentheses are unstandardized. All results are significant within a 95% confidence interval.
### Table 14a. Co-variances for the Full Sample.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Correlations</th>
<th>Correlation Coefficient</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>cov(Desire romantic relationship goal, Long term vs. short-term goal)</td>
<td>.36 ***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cov(Desire romantic relationship goal, Romantic feelings goal)</td>
<td>.34***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cov(Long term vs. short-term goal, Romantic feelings goal)</td>
<td>.26**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cov(Self behaviors, Partner behaviors)</td>
<td>.15***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cov(Negative emotions, Normative Beliefs)</td>
<td>-0.07***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cov(Negative emotions, Social network overlap)</td>
<td>-0.03**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cov(Negative emotions, Social network encourage/discourage)</td>
<td>0.02**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cov(Positive emotions, Social network information)</td>
<td>0.03*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cov(Inclusion of other within the self, Inclusion of other within the self - partner)</td>
<td>0.72***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cov(Inclusion of others within the self, Relationship centrality)</td>
<td>0.22***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cov(Partner ideal match, Normative beliefs)</td>
<td>0.08**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cov(Partner ideal match, Partner family approval)</td>
<td>0.22***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cov(Relationship scripts, Relationship ideal fit)</td>
<td>0.31***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cov(Relationship centrality, Communal strength)</td>
<td>0.28***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cov(Normative beliefs, Inclusions of other’s social network)</td>
<td>0.21***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cov(Normative beliefs, Social network overlap)</td>
<td>0.17***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cov(Partner’s friends’ approval, Inclusion of other’s social network)</td>
<td>0.10**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cov(Inclusion of other’s social network, Social network overlap)</td>
<td>0.20***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cov(Inclusion of other’s social network, Social network view as perfect couple)</td>
<td>0.43***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cov(Inclusion of other’s social network, Social network encourage/discourage)</td>
<td>0.12**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cov(Social network overlap, Social network view as perfect couple)</td>
<td>0.12**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cov(Social network overlap, Social network encourage/discourage)</td>
<td>0.21***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cov(Social network view as perfect couple, Social network encourage/discourage)</td>
<td>0.34***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cov(Communal strength, Other perspective taking)</td>
<td>0.08**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* *** Indicates a significant correlation (p < .001); ** Indicates a significant correlation (p < .01); * Indicates a significant correlation (p < .05).
Table 14a continued. Co-variances for the Full Sample.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Covariance</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>cov(Communal strength, Self perspective taking)</td>
<td>.12***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cov(Other perspective taking, Self perspective taking)</td>
<td>.16***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* ***Indicates a significant correlation (p < .001); ** Indicates a significant correlation (p < .01); * Indicates a significant correlation (p < .05).
Table 14b. Co-variances for the Emerging Adult Sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Correlations</th>
<th>Correlation Coefficient</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>cov(Desire romantic relationship goal, Long term vs. short-term goal)</td>
<td>.48***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cov(Desire romantic relationship goal, Romantic feelings goal)</td>
<td>.42***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cov(Long term vs. short-term goal, Romantic feelings goal)</td>
<td>.31***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cov(Self behaviors, Partner behaviors)</td>
<td>.19***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cov(Self behaviors, Positive emotions)</td>
<td>.10***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cov(Self behaviors, Part ideal match)</td>
<td>.07**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cov(Partner behaviors, Positive emotions)</td>
<td>.08**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cov(Negative emotions, Part ideal match)</td>
<td>-.03*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cov(Negative emotions, Normative beliefs)</td>
<td>-.07***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cov(Positive emotions, Social network information)</td>
<td>.13***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cov(Inclusion of other within the self, Inclusion of other within the self - partner)</td>
<td>.80***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cov(Inclusion of others within the self, Relationship centrality)</td>
<td>.18 $p = .051$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cov(Partner ideal match, Normative beliefs)</td>
<td>.13**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cov(Partner ideal match, Partner family approval)</td>
<td>.23***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cov(Relationship scripts, Relationship ideal fit)</td>
<td>.39***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cov(Relationship ideal fit, Social network encourage/discourage)</td>
<td>.10*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cov(Relationship centrality, Communal strength)</td>
<td>.21*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cov(Normative beliefs, Inclusions of other’s social network)</td>
<td>.13**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cov(Normative beliefs, Social network overlap)</td>
<td>.11*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cov(Inclusion of other’s social network, Social net work view as perfect couple)</td>
<td>.43***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cov(Social network overlap, Social network encourage/discourage)</td>
<td>.24***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cov(Social net work view as perfect couple, Social network encourage/discourage)</td>
<td>.32***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cov(Other perspective taking, Self perspective taking)</td>
<td>.16***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note.*** Indicates a significant correlation (p < .001); ** Indicates a significant correlation (p < .01); * Indicates a significant correlation (p < .05).
Table 14c. Covariance for the Adult Sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Correlations</th>
<th>Correlation Coefficient</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>cov(Desire romantic relationship goal, Long term vs. short-term goal)</td>
<td>.18***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cov(Desire romantic relationship goal, Romantic feelings goal)</td>
<td>.24***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cov(Long term vs. short-term goal, Romantic feelings goal)</td>
<td>.18***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cov(Self behaviors, Partner behaviors)</td>
<td>.15***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cov(Self behaviors, Positive emotions)</td>
<td>.05**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cov(Partner behaviors, Negative emotions)</td>
<td>-.01*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cov(Partner behaviors, Positive emotions)</td>
<td>.11***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cov(Partner behaviors, Social network information)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cov(Negative emotions, Normative Beliefs)</td>
<td>-.05***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cov(Negative emotions, Social network overlap)</td>
<td>-.03**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cov(Positive emotions, Social network information)</td>
<td>.07**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cov(Inclusion of other within the self, Inclusion of other within the self - partner)</td>
<td>.58***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cov(Inclusion of others within the self, Relationship centrality)</td>
<td>.27**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cov(Partner ideal match, Partner family approval)</td>
<td>.18***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cov(Relationship scripts, Relationship ideal fit)</td>
<td>.20***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cov(Relationship ideal fit, Social network overlap)</td>
<td>.10***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cov(Relationship centrality, Communal strength)</td>
<td>.28***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cov(Normative beliefs, Partner’s friends’ approval)</td>
<td>.09*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cov(Normative beliefs, Inclusion of other’s social network)</td>
<td>.23***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cov(Normative beliefs, Social network overlap)</td>
<td>.17***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cov(Partner family approval, Social network overlap)</td>
<td>.08*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cov(Partner’s friends’ approval, Inclusion of other’s social network)</td>
<td>.20***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cov(Inclusion of other’s social network, Social network overlap)</td>
<td>.19***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cov(Inclusion of other’s social network, Social network view as perfect couple)</td>
<td>.27***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. *** Indicates a significant correlation (p < .001); ** Indicates a significant correlation (p < .01); * Indicates a significant correlation (p < .05)
Table 14c continued. Co-variances for the Adult sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Covariance</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inclusion of other’s social network, Social network encourage/discourage</td>
<td>.09*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social network overlap, Social network view as perfect couple</td>
<td>.11**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social network overlap, Social network encourage/discourage</td>
<td>.15***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social network view as perfect couple, Social network encourage/discourage</td>
<td>.26***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communal strength, Self perspective taking</td>
<td>.13***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other perspective taking, Self perspective taking</td>
<td>.12***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* *** Indicates a significant correlation (p < .001); ** Indicates a significant correlation (p < .01); * Indicates a significant correlation (p < .05)
Chapter 5: Discussion

This dissertation proposed and tested a model of relationship awareness as a process of uncertainty management and information seeking. The early stages of relationships can be full of uncertainty (Berger & Calabrese, 1975; Knobloch & Miller, 2008; Sunnafrank, 1990), thus it seems likely that relationship awareness plays an integral part in the early development of romantic relationships. The results of this dissertation are consistent with this conclusion. Moreover, experiencing an “aha” moment, or an awareness that one is now in a relationship, appears to be a common experience for most people who are in the early stages of relationship development. The ability to recognize when one has successfully (or unsuccessfully) entered into a relationship has several advantages. First, being able to determine if one is in a relationship is potentially efficient in terms of opportunity costs. If a person lacks the ability to determine that they have entered into a relationship, that person risks spending a lot of unnecessary resources in trying to develop a relationship that has no chance of success. Instead, individuals are more likely to invest minimal resources on relationships with incompatible partners. Additionally, knowing that one’s relationship status has changed helps ensure that people are more likely to change their behaviors in order to avoid engaging in inappropriate social behavior, which may endanger their fledgling relationship.

Overall, the results reported in Chapter 4 supported the hypothesized model, despite some minor changes. Additionally, the findings in this dissertation have implications for relationship research particularly future research on the topic of
relationship awareness. This chapter will discuss the findings for the proposed hypothesis and research questions, as well as the study limitations and directions for future research.

**Uncertainty and Information Seeking**

As predicted, use of the information sources was associated with all three types of relational uncertainty (self, partner, & relationship). The results are consistent with URT (Berger & Calabrese, 1975), which states that people who experience uncertainty are often motivated to reduce it by engaging in information seeking. In addition, the results of the CFA for uncertainty appraisals also revealed some interesting results regarding uncertainty and information seeking. The results revealed that relational goals (long term vs. short-term relationships, desire for a romantic relationship, and romantic feeling for partner) and relational uncertainty predicted the latent variable labeled uncertainty appraisal, suggesting that uncertainty management is a process in which individuals assess their level of uncertainty in comparison to their relationship goals as argued by Brashers (2001) and Afifi and Weiner (2004). In other words, the results of the CFA suggest that when people make uncertainty appraisals about their relationship that the motivation to engage in information seeking is driven by their relational goals and current level of uncertainty. The more someone’s uncertain is about whether or not their relationship goals are being met the more likely they are to engage in information seeking. The results of the CFA are consistent with UMT, which states that appraisals are one of the factors that shape people’s responses to uncertainty (Brashers, 2001). Additionally, it seems plausible that if uncertainty appraisals are driven by one’s relationship goals, the more uncertain someone is about high priority relationship goals, the more discomfort one might feel. Higher degrees of discomfort would likely indicate
that the individual is experiencing more uncertainty than they desire, motivating them to engage in information seeking (Afifi & Weiner, 2004).

**Use of the Information Sources and the Relationship Awareness Process**

Overall the hypothesized model of relationship awareness was supported. Specifically, the results of this study examining Research Question 1 [To what degree does the use of the information sources account for the total level of relationship awareness (as measured by R^2)?], found that the resulting model explained nearly all of the variance. There were a couple of minor adjustments to the measurement of the model, but the results were still consistent with the theoretical background presented in chapter 2. Although the results of this study are consistent with the assumption of URT that higher degrees of uncertainty motivates people to engage in information seeking, it is also consistent with assumption of UMT that uncertainty can be associated with all types of emotions. The participants in this study reported that they were experienced high levels of positive emotions and low levels of negative emotions, yet they also reported that they experienced relatively moderate levels of relational uncertainty (see the means in Table 2). This result is consistent with the assumption of UMT that uncertainty can be associated with a wide range of emotions, not just anxiety (Brashers, 2001).

While the results are very encouraging, the reader should interpret them with some caution. First, as mentioned in the previous chapter, the high R^2 values should not be interpreted as an indication of near perfect models, but models that have explained nearly all of the available variance in the model. Although the high R^2 statistics are encouraging it is important to evaluate the results in terms of its consistency with the underlying theories, specifically that people’s motivation is related to their level of
uncertainty in relation to their relationship goals. The results in this dissertation were consistent with underlying theory, thus one value of the results is in the contribution it makes to extend URT, UMT, and TMIM.

Additionally, many of the variables used in the study, were single item indicators such as the long term versus short-term goal item, the social network approval (family, friend, partner’s family, & partners’ friends), the relationship script item, and the inclusion of other with in the self (IOS) item to name a few. Although single item measures are good at measuring constructs and reduce cognitive load, it is likely that they did not capture some elements of the construct they were measuring. Future research should employ multi-item measures of the single item variables used in this study. Despite this challenge, the resulting models do provide clear evidence for the existence of the relationship awareness process.

Additionally, this study makes a unique contribution by showing how the variables work together. Previous research has generally examined the information sources and the relationship awareness variables separately. I am not aware of any study that has examined these variables in one model. This is particularly true for the information source variables. The results from the three SEM models in this study provide a more detailed picture of how the information source variables interact with each other.

**Cognition, Emotions, Social Networks, and Behaviors Predict Relationship Awareness**

The purpose of Research Question 2 [Are one or more of the information sources more strongly associated with relationship awareness (as measured by standardized
estimates of the parameters in a structural model)?] was to determine if one or more of the information sources was more influential in the relationship awareness process than others. The answer, like the question, is complex. A simple examination of the standardized coefficients in all of the models shows that cognitive information sources have the strongest predictors of the relationship outcomes that they predicted (inclusion of others within the self, inclusion of others within the self - partner, and relationship centrality). This does not seem surprising since the proposed model of the relationship awareness process is cognitive by nature. However, other information sources were also highly influential in predicting relationship awareness. For example, the use of social network information also strongly predicted relationship awareness for adults, while self-behaviors strongly predicted relationship awareness for emerging adults. Additionally, emotions played a much larger role for emerging adults, than for adults, in predicting relationship awareness, the same can be said for perceptions of partner’s behaviors. One possible explanation for the differences between emerging adults and adults in how information seeking predicted the relationship awareness outcome variables may be due to their general experience in recognizing potential relationships and relationship partners. It may be that generally over time as adults have gained more experience; they have learned that positive emotions and partner behaviors are indications of a relationship. Therefore generally speaking, adults may have only a limited amount of uncertainty regarding these two types of information, and may only need to seek enough information seeking from positive emotions and partner behaviors to integrate that information with the other information sources so that they become aware that they are in a relationship. Another possible explanation, and one that I think is more likely, is that
positive emotions and partner behaviors predict aspects of relationship awareness that were not captured in this study. Future research should work to identify these unmeasured aspects of relationship awareness to further our understanding of the relationship awareness process.

Another interesting finding is that the cognitive information sources were significantly associated with the relationship awareness variables that are more indicative of the mental representations of the relationship, while the other information sources were primarily associated with perspective taking. The results indicate that the information sources seem to have slightly different functions in the relationship awareness process. Furthermore, the results suggest that emotions and behaviors are highly associated with perspective taking. Rusbult et al. (2004) argued that committed individuals experience a transformation of motivation when people begin to sacrifice their own self-interests for those of the relationship. Additionally, Clark and Mills (1979) argued that people who enter into communal relationships, such as a committed romantic relationship, shift their mental focus to try and anticipate their partner’s needs. Thus, given the results from this study, it seems plausible that emotions and behaviors may play a role in initiating the transformation of motivation that seems apparent in committed relationships. Future research should examine the relationship between information seeking and Rusbult’s transformation of motivation. It may be that emotional and behavioral information seeking may act as a catalyst for the transformation of motivation. As people increase their level of perspective taking, this may cause them to shift their orientation, and put the relationship ahead of their own self-interests (Rusbult et al., 2004).
Information Sources Mediate Uncertainty Appraisals and Relationship Awareness

The purpose of Research Question 3 (To what degree do the information sources mediate the association between uncertainty and awareness?) was to determine if information seeking mediates the relationship between uncertainty and relationship awareness. The results of the mediation analyses found that use of the four information sources significantly mediated the relationship between uncertainty appraisals and the relationship awareness outcome variables. Furthermore, the results revealed that the relationship between uncertainty appraisals and relationship uncertainty was indirect as there was no significant direct effect between uncertainty appraisals and the relationship awareness outcome variables. The results of the mediation analyses confirmed that all of the significant paths in all three models were mediated. It is particularly interesting that there were no significant direct effects in this model as this might indicate that uncertainty appraisals and information seeking play unique, but critical roles in the relationship awareness process. Furthermore, the results have implications for URT, UMT, and TMIM, in terms of describing the relationship between uncertainty and information seeking. More specifically, the results of this uncertainty appraisal CFA suggest that relationship goals may have an influential role in determining whether one engages in information seeking. In other words, people may only be motivated to engage in information seeking when relational uncertainty is relevant to their relationship goals, which is consistent with UMT and TMIM. In addition, from a URT perspective, it may be that the more goal relevant someone’s relational uncertainty is, the more anxiety one may feel, which in turn may increase motivation to engage in information seeking in order to reduce the goal relevant uncertainty. Future research should further examine the
relationship between uncertainty management and relationship goals. Future research should also work to duplicate and extend the uncertainty appraisal – information-seeking relationship found in this study in other lines of research examining the relationship between relational uncertainty and information seeking (Knobloch, 2007; Knobloch et al., 2007; Knobloch & Solomon, 1999, 2002, 2005; Solomon & Knobloch, 2004). Additionally, the total effects for all of the mediation analyses indicated that all of the mediated paths generally were equally influential during the ‘aha’ moment in relationship development. The results also indicate that all of the relationship awareness outcome variables are affected equally regardless of which information sources, or how many information sources predicted them. The take away seems to be that all of the paths to relationship awareness seem to be equally valuable.

**Life Stage Differences in Relationship Awareness**

**Use of Information Sources**

The resulting SEM models revealed differences that suggest that relationship awareness may be a dynamic process that changes between emerging adulthood and adulthood. The results indicate that participants in both samples engaged in information seeking across all four information sources, with cognition being the information source providing the most impact on the relationship awareness outcome variables. Although this study was not designed to test cause and effect relationships, the results seem to suggest that the relationship awareness process adapts to changes in life stage. The results indicated that overall, information seeking predicted more of the relationship awareness outcome variables for emerging adults than adults, as indicated by the increased number of paths between the information seeking and relationship awareness outcome variables.
Moreover, the results also found that in addition to cognition, self-behaviors had more of an impact on the relationship awareness outcome variables than the other information sources. Conversely for adults, social network information predicted many more of the relationship awareness outcome variables than for emerging adults. Additionally, positive emotions and partner behaviors did not impact the relationship awareness outcome variables at all, despite the fact that adults did engage in seeking information from those two sources.

The differences between the models suggest that the relationship awareness process may be adaptable as people shift from one life stage to the next. As discussed in Chapter 2, although there are some biological differences between emerging adults and adults (cite), mostly due to brain development (specifically the prefrontal cortex; Arain et al., 2013), most of the differences have been attributed to cultural expectations for people in the two respective life stages (Arnett, 2000). For example, as one enters into adulthood it is customary for many people to begin finding life partners and starting families. Thus, future research should examine the relationship between cultural expectations associated with specific life stages and changes between those life stages, and the relationship awareness process. Specifically, since conscious thought is theorized to help humans navigate cultural demands (Baumeister & Masicampo, 2010), it seems plausible that relationship awareness is adaptive to changes in cultural environments. If this assumption is correct this may also mean that information seeking and uncertainty management developed as means of navigating the complex demands of culture, particularly those associated with romantic relationships.
For example, emerging adulthood is a developmental stage that exists as a direct result of Western culture (Arnett, 2000). Emerging adulthood has emerged as a growing number of people ages 18 to 25 are going to college. According to Arnett, over time the increase of people ages 18 to 25 attending college has led to a change in cultural expectations for the whole age group regardless of whether or not they actually attend college. In turn, these new cultural expectations have led to a new developmental stage, which in turn has created a new set of cultural expectations associated with this group. According to Arnett cultural expectations change as people move out of emerging adulthood to adulthood. The results from this study are consistent with notion that the relationship awareness process changes as a result of changing cultural expectation associated with developmental stages. However, future research will need to directly test this assumption.

**Information Sources and Relationship Awareness**

Some of the differences between emerging adults and adults were not expected. For instance, it was not expected that adults would rely on social network information more than emerging adults to become aware of their relationship status. Nor, was it expected that adults would not rely on positive emotions and perceptions of partner’s behaviors as information sources. While these results were unexpected there are a number of plausible explanations for these unexpected results.

First, the majority of emerging adults in this study are undergraduate college students. It is likely that many of these students are dating fellow students, whom they met through their social network. Since it is likely that many of the emerging adults share friends in their social network, social approval may be assumed, and therefore, emerging
adults may not feel they need to seek out that information. Additionally, marriage might not be an immediate goal for many emerging adults, thus they may be less concerned about social approval. In contrast, many adults may share few, if any, social network members, thus adults may be less likely to assume approval from their partner’s social network. Furthermore, adults may be more likely to seek a life partner, which might make social network approval more important to adults, as some members of their partner’s social network may become a permanent part of their lives.

Another surprising finding was that for both emerging adults and adults, correlations indicated that information from their partner’s social network influenced relationship awareness, but not their own social networks. One plausible explanation is that people may perceive that their friends and family will love them unconditionally even if their family does not approve of their choices in partners. Moreover, people may assume that since their family loves them unconditionally, that given enough time their friends and family will also grow to love their partner as well. Another explanation is that social approval from friends and family may become important once the relationship enters that maintenance phase, as many studies utilizing participants in more established relationship do report more social influence from friends and family (Etcheverry & Agnew, 2004; Felmlee, 2001). Future research should further examine potential differences between emerging adults and adults in social network influence on a variety of relational outcomes. Additionally, future research should examine the differences in social approval between those who are in the early phases of relationship development and those in more advanced phases. Given that the results of this study indicate that people are more concerned with the approval from their partner’s social network than
their own, it also seems fruitful to further examine the role of partner’s social influence on relational outcomes. It also seems plausible that people’s own social networks may have more influence before the relationship ever begins. Additionally, future research should examine the relationship between uncertainty management and social network influence to better understand how people use social network information to become aware of their relationship status. For instance, it is plausible that a person’s own social network may have influenced their ideal standards for partners and relationship, as well as their relational scripts. Thus, social networks may play a critical role in setting up relationship expectations, which people rely on for information. However, the results from this study suggest that life stage may moderate that effect of social network influence.

It was also surprising to see differences between emerging adults and adults in their use of positive emotions and perceptions of partner behaviors as information sources. As mentioned previously, many emerging adults may have limited relationship experience compared to their adult counterparts. Limited experience likely limits people’s ability to efficiently determine if they are now in a relationship. Thus, emerging adults may be more likely to engage in more rigorous information seeking as many are still learning how to identify whether or not they are in a relationship. Conversely, adults generally may have much more relationship experience, and may have become much more skilled at becoming aware when they have entered into a relationship. Thus, some of the relationship awareness process may have become automatic. For example, if one’s potential partner seems more eager to spend time together, and shows signs of physical affection such as holding hands, than adults who have more relationship experience
would most likely automatically assume that this a positive sign that they are now a couple. Based upon this line of thinking, these attributions become automatic, because the information has become highly accessible to repeated rehearsal during adolescence and emerging adulthood. As people become more skilled they would need to rely less on conscious thought to recognize relationship-affirming information. Thus, it seems likely that as people gain more experience entering new relationships, positive emotions and perceptions of partner’s behaviors move from information sources to eliciting triggers. However, it is also possible that positive emotions and partner behaviors do affect relationship awareness, but affect aspects of relationship awareness that were not captured in this study.

Lastly, it was very surprising that there were no gender differences in the relationship awareness process. One possible interpretation is that this is because men and women share the same cognitive machinery and therefore the process of relationship awareness is also the same for both. The idea that men and women having the same cognitive machinery seem quite plausible in light of the results presented in this dissertation. Although this may be true, this does not mean that gender differences do not exist. Rather if the gender similarity found in this dissertation is due to having the same cognitive machinery, then the most logical place to see gender differences would be within the information sources themselves. In other words, although men and women are relying on the same sources of information, it is possible that the information within each information sources differs between men and women. This hypothesis is consistent with results of some studies in the relationship literature. For example, Campbell et al. (2001) found some significant gender differences on men and women’s rating of their ideal
standards for self, partner and the relationship. Similarly, Fehr, and Harasymchuk (2005) found significant gender differences in emotional reactions to partner’s negative responses to participants’ expressed feelings of dissatisfaction. Additionally, Sprecher and Felmlee (2000) found some gender differences in perceptions of social approval and encouragement, and Weigel (2008) found that women rated their own use of commitment behaviors higher than did men. If there are in fact gender differences in the types of information attended to within each of the information sources, this might be due to gender acting as type of cognitive lens, which people use to process certain types of information and disregard others, thus creating gender differences in the information contained within each information source.

**Implications**

This dissertation has several implications for academic research and applied fields. First, to my knowledge no other study has examined cognition, emotions, social network influence, and perceptions of relationship behaviors in the same model. The results from this study provide relationship researchers with an initial look at how these variables interact with each other in a single model, and the interactions between these variable provide researchers with a comparison point for examining how these variable might influence other relationship outcomes such as satisfaction, commitment, relationship maintenance, and attachment. This research also has implications for relationship researchers who are interested in examining the effects of relational uncertainty on relationship outcomes. More specifically, this study highlights the relationship between relational uncertainty and relationship goals. Although the results cannot specify the exact nature of the relationship between relational uncertainty and
relationship goals, this study demonstrated that there is a clear relationship between the two variables and provides justification for examining this relationship in further detail.

In addition, this research also has implications for relationship researchers who are interested in the influence of social network on relationship outcomes. This study is the first to examine social network influence on relationship in the early stages of a relationship. In fact, reported relationship length in the studies cited in this dissertation was at least one year or more. Additionally, much of the research examining the influence of social networks on relationship outcomes has relied on college samples. To my knowledge, this study is the first study to include an adult sample to examine the social influence in relationships. The results of this study demonstrated differences between emerging adults and adults in the early stages of relationship development, and the same may be true for other stages of relationship development as well. Furthermore, this study found that participant’s own social networks had limited influence in the early stages of relationships, yet they have been shown to affect relationship outcomes in more established relationships (Agnew et al., 2001; Etchevery & Agnew, 2004; Felmlee 2001), which suggests that social network influence may vary across different phases of relationship development.

This study also has implications for researchers interested in other relationship phases such as relationship maintenance and dissolution. Given that relational uncertainty could potentially exist at any stage of relationships, it makes sense that relationship awareness may be a multiphasic process. However, it seems likely that the relationship awareness process may work differently in other stages of relationship development. For example, people in the maintenance phase are already aware of their relationship status,
and are not as likely to engage in information seeking for that purpose. However, people in the maintenance stage may be scanning for potential threats to their relationship, and perceived threats to the relationship may create relational uncertainty, which could motivate people to engage in information seeking in order to determine the current state of their relationship. In addition, people in declining relationships may also utilize the relationship awareness process to determine if their relationship has come to an end. It may be that relationship awareness in the relationship dissolution phase may work in a similar way as it does in early relationship development. It may be that an eliciting trigger causes individuals to engage in goal relevant uncertainty appraisals, which in turn may lead to information seeking, and eventually awareness that their relationship is in decline or has dissolved. Future research should test this hypothesis.

The results of this study also have implications for consciousness researchers. Biologist Gerald Edelman argued that one of the main functions of conscious thought is to reduce uncertainty among alternatives (Edelman, 1989). The results of this study are consistent with this argument. Thus, uncertainty management may be a foundation for providing theoretical guidance for designing studies to examine conscious thought processed in other domains outside of romantic relationships.

Furthermore, the results have implications for the fourth phase of relationship awareness, which I call the behavioral phase of relationship awareness that was not tested in this dissertation. During the behavioral phase, I argue that as people have become aware that they have entered into a new relationship they have generally not confirmed the new status of the relationship with their partner. Since the individual has not confirmed the new status of the relationship they do not know if their partner has come to
the same awareness about the status of their relationship. As a result, I argue that uncertainty, due to a lack of knowledge about their partner’s awareness, creates a motivation to confirm their partner’s awareness, a process I call mutual affirmation. Future research should test this mutual affirmation hypothesis.

Lastly, the results of this study have implications for applied fields, most notably relationship education programs and relationship therapy. Relationship education programs can make use of the results of this study by educating their participants about how uncertainty management and the information sources affect their judgments about potential relationships or relationship partners, thus potentially helping them to choose partners and relationships that are a better fit for the individual. Likewise, the results have implications for relationship therapists helping patients who are having trouble identifying partners or developing relationships that are a good fit for the individual. Therapists may be able to examine how people are utilizing the information sources to come to judgments about their relationships and make adjustments to the information that people are using to help them develop relationships that best meet the client’s needs. For example, a therapist may examine a client’s beliefs about his or her ideal partner or what an ideal relationship looks like, and help the person make adjustments to these beliefs to improve the likelihood that their clients will become more successful in developing a relationship better suited to their needs.

**Limitations and Future Directions**

This study took an important step forward in describing the process of relationship awareness during early relationship development. However, like all studies, it has some limitations. First, although support was found for a linear model of
relationship awareness, it is quite likely that in reality the relationship awareness process contains a series of feedback loops. In other words, for many people, it is unlikely that people simply make an uncertainty appraisal, engage in information seeking, and then become aware of their relationship status. Instead, it is more likely that initially people engage in the process, do not become aware of their relationship, and end up circling back through the process. Some people may start the process over again from the beginning, while others may simply go back and re-engage in information seeking. Additionally, this process could potentially repeat for several iterations before one becomes aware of the status of their relationship. Thus, the process is most likely a series of feedback loops. Future research should examine these feedback loops. One potential way to examine feedback loops is to conduct experiments in which participants engage in the information seeking process. In the control group participants would be allowed to reach a judgment about the status of the relationship without any intervention. However, in the experimental group participants would be given additional context, which would be designed to create more uncertainty, such as the participants’ partner behaving in an ambiguous manner or suddenly providing mixed messages.

Second, this study is correlational, so I was unable to determine any causal nature of relationship awareness. Therefore, future research should examine the causal nature of the relationship awareness process. First, experiments need to be conducted to examine various parts of the relationship awareness process to better understand the nature of relationship awareness. Second, future research should use diary studies to track participants as they undergo the relationship awareness process to understand what causes the process, and to potentially identify feedback loops and what triggers them.
Third, the use of convenience samples in both the emerging adult and adult samples do not allow me to generalize the results to all emerging adults and adults. Future research should examine the relationship awareness process using random samples to obtain generalizable results. Obtaining a generalizable sample to examine the relationship awareness process will make it possible to see if differences in demographic variables such like ethnicity or relationship type (e.g., heterosexual vs. same-sex relationships) might influence the relationship awareness process. Additionally, there are likely other aspects of relationship awareness for which I was not able to account for, either because there is no known way to measure them or because these aspects have yet to be explained by theory or detected through empirical research. While some aspects of awareness and conscious thought not accounted for in this study have been identified in the consciousness literature such as past recall, hypothetical, and future prospective thinking (see Baumeister & Masicampo, 2010 for a review), there still may be aspects of relationship awareness yet to be identified. Future research needs to be conducted to identify other potential aspects of relationship awareness.

Furthermore, participants in this study reported retrospectively about how they knew that they were in a relationship or prospectively about how they will determine if they are in a relationship. While this information is extremely informative, I was not able to study relationship awareness in real time as it was happening. Future research should focus on conducting experiments and observational studies designed to examine the relationship awareness process as close to real time as possible.

On the other hand, retrospective accounts may also provide an opportunity to examine how people carry memories from the “aha” moment into their current
relationships. Relationship memories are malleable (Holmberg & Veroff, 1998) and some researchers have argued that people encode and recall memories in relation to the attainment of goals (Conway & Pleydell-Pearce, 2000; Conway, Singer & Tagini, 2004). In other words, when people recall the “aha” moment they may be reconstructing the memory to serve them in the current moment or in the future. Thus, it is possible that each time someone recalls the “aha” moment he or she is updating their relational scripts about that moment to create a coherent story about that event to help them maintain their relationships and attain relationship goals. There is some empirical support for this argument. For example, research by Orbuch, Veroff, and Holmberg (1993) found that the majority of married couples surveyed told collaborative stories about their courtship story in year 1, which predicted well-being in the third year of marriage. Additionally, Wilson and Huston (2013) found that newlywed couples that experienced a shared reality during courtship were more likely to have more durable marriages, and Ponzetti (2005) found that mutual recollection of courtship events between relationship partners provided justification for progression of relationships toward marriage. Ponzetti also suggested that relationship partners may rely on these memories to de-escalate marital tension and conflict.

In a similar vein, the relationship awareness process may prompt the beginning of a shared reality between relationship partners. It may be that as people become aware of their relationships they may begin writing their relationship scripts to create a coherent courtship script, and that the degree to which these scripts are shared early in relationship may predict future relationship outcomes. Therefore, it is possible that one of the functions of relationship awareness is to update relationship scripts and schemas to
influence future behaviors, which are carried out by automatic processes for the purpose of goal attainment. This line of thinking is consistent with theory proposed by Baumeister, Masicampo, and Vohs, who argued that conscious thought does not generally control behavior in the current moment (that is done by automatic processes), but that it directs future behaviors (Baumeister, Masicampo, & Vohs, 2011). Future research should examine the relationship between retrospective accounts of the “aha” moment and the relationship model presented in this study, and examine the degree to which shared accounts of the “aha” moment predict future relationship outcomes.

Fourth, since relationship awareness does not occur in isolation, future research should examine the process by surveying couples. Examining couples will not only shed light on how the process occurs during natural relational interaction, but may also potentially lead to finding gender differences in the relationship differences that were not found in the current study. It is plausible that gender effects did not occur because the participants answered survey items in isolation from their partners or potential partners. It may be that gender differences in the relationship process only occur within couples rather than across couples (or individuals) or when people are interacting with their partners. Thus, future research should examine should utilize dyadic data analysis to examine this possibility.

Fifth, some of the participants were either not in a relationship or were unsure about their relationship status, yet saw potential for a relationship. Although, I did find some subtle differences in terms of removed paths in the full and emerging adult models, 85% of the participants were in a relationship. Therefore, I am still unable to make any conclusions about possible differences in the relationship awareness process between
those in a relationship and those were not in a relationship or were unsure. Future research should examine the differences between those in relationships and those who are not or are unsure. Even though all participants were engaging in conscious thought, participants in relationships were prompted to engage in memory retrieval, while those were not in a relationship or were unsure were prompted to engage in prospective thinking. Thus participants were engaged in different functions of conscious thought (Baumeister & Masicampo, 2010), which might potentially influence the relationship process in different ways.

Sixth, this study was not able to account for specific cultural expectations associated with emerging adulthood and adulthood that might influence the relationship model investigated in this study. Arnett (2000) argued that emerging adulthood is a culturally constructed developmental stage. In our focus group study discussed in Chapter 2 some participants mentioned having a need to finish their education before thinking about adult roles such as marriage. The need to complete their education is consistent with Arnett’s arguments that emerging adults view becoming self-sufficient as a priority for transitioning into adulthood, as earning a college degree will open many doors that can help emerging adults become more self-sufficient. Similarly there are cultural expectations associated with adulthood as well, such as becoming established in a career and getting married. These assumptions are consistent with Family Development Theory, which states that there are tasks associated with each developmental stage and that roles are governed by social norms (Smith & Hamon, 2012, Chapter 3). It is quite likely that many of the tasks associated with each developmental stage are governed by social norms. Thus, future research should examine the possible influence that cultural norms
associated with specific development might have on the relationship awareness process.

In a similar vein, given that many emerging adults live in a fishbowl environment, it is likely that some friendships may be a prelude to entering romantic relationships. Transitioning from friendship to romantic relationships may also have influences on the relationship awareness process, particularly a shift in relationship goals, which might lead to relational uncertainty, and might influence the information sources emerging adults attend to. Thus, future research should examine potential differences in the relationship awareness process between those who enter straight into a relationship and those who transitioned from friendship to romantic partners.

Also, there were some unexpected findings, which cannot be explained in this study and should be examined in future research. First, future research should examine the role of social networks in the relationship awareness process for emerging adults. One place to start is by conducting a study to see if social networks provide an eliciting trigger for the relationship awareness process in emerging adults. Another avenue worth investigating is relationship goals; future research could focus on experiments in which relationship goals are manipulated among emerging adults, to see if differences in relational goals (e.g., casual dating goal vs. goal of finding a life partner) leads to changes in the use of social information.

Similarly, for adults future research should examine the role of positive emotions and partner behaviors. As mentioned previously, it is plausible that adults are more experienced in identifying that they are in an actual relationship than their emerging adult counterparts. Therefore, it is equally plausible that part of the relationship awareness has become automatic, and that adults are more likely to recognize positive emotions and
positive partner behaviors as an indication that they are in a relationship. Thus, it is possible that positive emotions and partner behaviors may act as eliciting triggers in the relationship process. Future research should test this hypothesis.

Furthermore, it is quite likely that relationship awareness is multiphasic, meaning that it is quite likely that relationship awareness occurs in all stages of relationships. Therefore, future research should examine the relationship awareness process in the maintenance and dissolution stages. Moreover, future research should compare the process across the early stages of relationship development, the maintenance phase, and the dissolution phase to determine if the process operates differently across relationship stages.

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, this study examined the process of relationship awareness in emerging adults and adults. Overall, the hypothesized model was supported, yet with some interesting differences between emerging adults and adults. Furthermore, the models explained most of the variance, indicating that the resulting models were satisfactorily explaining what people experience. Additionally, all of the paths mediated the relationship between uncertainty appraisals and relationship awareness. Despite the promising results of this initial study, much work still needs to be done to better understand relationship awareness in relationships. This study has provided the foundation for understanding relationship awareness in the early stages of relationships, while also creating new questions that inspire future research.
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Appendix: Study Survey

Demographics

First we would like to ask about a current relationship.
1. Are you presently in a romantic relationship?
   _____ Yes
   _____ No
   _____ Unsure if I am in a relationship

2. If your answer to question 1 was yes, how long have you been in the relationship?
   Number of months _____

3. Relationship status:
   _____ Dating exclusively
   _____ Dating more than one person
   _____ Unsure if I am in a relationship

4. Are You:
   _____ Female
   _____ Male

5. How do you describe yourself:
   _____ Caucasian/White
   _____ African American/Black
   _____ Latino/Hispanic/Mexican
   _____ Native American/Alaskan Native/Aleut
   _____ Asian American or Pacific Islander
   _____ Multi-ethnic/Multi-racial (list)
   _______________________________________________________
   _____ Other __________________

6. Highest level of education completed:
   _____ Not a High School graduate
   _____ High School graduate
   _____ Some college, no degree
   _____ Associate’s degree
   _____ Bachelor’s degree
   _____ Advanced degree

7. What is your age? _____ (Please type in your age.)
Eliciting Trigger Prompts.

Relationship Prompt (For participants who report they are currently in a relationship)

Please think back to the beginning of your relationship. Specifically, please think about that moment when you knew that you were now in an actual relationship. Next, write 3-4 sentences describing what was happening when you first realized that you were now in a new relationship.

Non-relationship Prompt (For participants who are seeing someone, but report that they are unsure or are not currently in a relationship)

Let’s assume that you and the person you are seeing become a couple. Please think about the types of things or events that would make you decide that you are now in an actual relationship. Next, please write 3-4 sentences describing how you will know that you are in a relationship.

Relational Uncertainty Measure Knobloch et al. (2007)
The items were scored on a seven-point scale (1 = completely or almost completely uncertain, 7 = completely or almost completely certain; items were reverse coded for analysis so that higher scores indicated higher levels of uncertainty)

How certain are you about . . .?

Self uncertainty four items:
1. how you feel about your relationship
2. your view of your relationship
3. how important your relationship is to you
4. your goals for the future of your relationship

Partner uncertainty four items:
5. how your partner feels about your relationship
6. your partner’s view of your relationship
7. how important your relationship is to your partner
8. your partner’s goals for the future of your relationship

Relationship uncertainty four items:
9. how you can or cannot behave around your partner
10. the current status of your relationship
11. the definition of your relationship
12. the future of your relationship
Desired Relational Uncertainty Measure [Modified Knobloch et al. (2007) Relational Uncertainty]

The items were scored on a seven-point scale (1 = Much less certain to 7 = Much more certain)

Compared to your current level of certainty, would you like to be more or less certain about . . .?

Self uncertainty four items:
1. how you feel about your relationship
2. your view of your relationship,
3. how important your relationship is to you
4. your goals for the future of your relationship

Partner uncertainty four items:
5. how your partner feels about your relationship
6. your partner’s view of your relationship
7. how important your relationship is to your partner
8. your partner’s goals for the future of your relationship

Relationship uncertainty four items:
9. how you can or cannot behave around your partner
10. the current status of your relationship
11. the definition of your relationship
12. the future of your relationship

Uncertainty Appraisal Intensity item. (author)

The item was scored on a seven-point scale (1= extremely negative to 7 = extremely positive).

Many people experience some uncertainty when they first start a relationship. When you experience uncertainty in your relationship, do you feel more positive or negative feelings?

Long-term vs. Short-term Goal item (author)

The item was scored on a seven-point scale (1 = short-term to 7 = long-term).

To what degree do you want this relationship to be something that is short-term or long-term?
Relationship Outcome Goals [Revised from Guerrero & Chavez, (2005)]

The items were scored on a seven-point scale (1= disagree strongly to 7 = agree strongly).

I would like our situation to develop into a romantic relationship
I have romantic feelings for my partner.

Franiuk et al. (2004) Partner Ideal Measure

We would like to ask you some questions about your views toward your partner. For each item below, please select the response option that best reflects your feelings toward your partner (The items was measured on a seven-point scale (1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree, R = reverse scored item).

1. My current partner is my “soulmate.”
2. I know that there are many other people that are a better match for me than my current partner.
3. I can’t imagine finding a partner who is a better match for me than my current partner.
4. My partner is as close to ideal as a relationship partner as I ever expect to find.
5. There are many people in this world who would be close to what I am looking for in a partner than my current boyfriend/girlfriend.
6. My current partner is the “right” person for me.
7. My current partner is the person who I will eventually marry.

Relationship ideal discrepancies. (Author)
(The item was scored on a seven-point scale 1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree).

My current relationship matches my ideal.

Relationship scripts. (Author)
(The item was scored on a seven-point scale 1 = not close at all to 7 = extremely close).

Everyone has expectations about how a relationship should develop. Please tell us how closely your current relationship matches your expectations about how a relationship should unfold.
Behavioral Indicators of Commitment - Self (Weigel, 2008; R = reverse coded items which are fillers)

People do or say different things to show their romantic intentions to their partners in the beginning of a romantic relationship. Below we ask you to consider how often you engage in a variety of behaviors to show your intentions to your partner. For each behavior listed below, please indicate from 1 (Never) to 6 (All the Time) how often you use the behavior to indicate your commitment to your current partner. For example if you occasionally "Did little things to make your partner happy" you would write a “3” on the line before the item.

How often do **you** use this behavior to show or express your commitment to your partner?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Occasionally</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Most of The Time</th>
<th>All the Time</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>6</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

I:

1. _____ Do little things to make my partner happy
2. _____ Keep promises to my partner
R 3. ____Do little things to upset my partner
4._____ Show affection toward my partner
5._____ Do things to help my partner
6.____ Plan day-to-day activities around our relationship
7. _____ Treat my partner with common courtesy
R 8._____ Say I am tired of the relationship
9. _____ Give my partner gifts and surprises
10. _____ Do things together
11. _____ Talk out problems
12. _____ Let my partner know I accept her/him for who s/he is
R 13. ____Avoid spending time with my partner
14._____ Have fun with my partner
15._____ Tell my partner I love her/him
16._____ Make special plans for important days
R 17._____Tell my partner that our relationship has no future
18. _____ Leave my partner notes out of the blue
19. _____ Let my partner know I am willing to work out problems
20. _____ Am honest with her/him
21. _____ Show respect for her/his needs
22. _____ Do my fair share in the relationship
R23. _____ Do not include my partner in my plans
24. _____ Tell my partner I miss her/him when s/he is gone
25. _____ Listen to my partner
26. _____ Am supportive (even if it means backing off)
27. _____ Give time to my partner
28. _____ Tell my partner I’m committed to her/him
29. _____ Try to see things from her/his point of view
R 30. _____ Withdraw emotionally from my partner
31. _____ Let my partner know I trust her/him
32. _____ Tell my partner how I feel about her/him
R 33. _____ Point out our differences
34. _____ Work hard to communicate every day
35. _____ Remain faithful to my partner
36. _____ Tell my partner I don’t want anyone else
37. _____ Do things to surprise my partner.
Behavioral Indicators of Commitment - Partner (Weigel, 2008; R = reverse coded items which are fillers)

Next we ask you to consider how often your partner engages in a variety of behaviors to show his/her intention to you. For each behavior listed below, please indicate from 1 (Never) to 6 (All the Time) in front of the behavior to show how often your partner uses the behavior to indicate his/her intention to you. For example if your partner often "Does little things to make you happy" you would write a “4” on the line before the item. How often does your partner use these behaviors to show or express his/her commitment to you?

Next we ask you to consider how often your partner engages in a variety of behaviors to show his/her intention to you. For each behavior listed below, please indicate from 1 (Never) to 6 (All the Time) in front of the behavior to show how often your partner uses the behavior to indicate his/her intention to you. For example if your partner often "Does little things to make you happy" you would write a “4” on the line before the item. How often does your partner use these behaviors to show or express his/her commitment to you?

<table>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

My partner:

1. _____ Does little things to make me happy
2. _____ Keeps her/his promises to me
R 3. _____ Does little things to upset me
4. _____ Shows affection towards me
5. _____ Does things to help me
6. _____ Plans day-to-day activities around our relationship
7. _____ Treats me with common courtesy
R 8. _____ Says s/he is tired of the relationship
9. ______ Gives me gifts and surprises
10. _____ Does things with me
11. _____ Talks out problems
12. _____ Lets me know s/he accepts me for who I am
R 13. ____ Avoids spending time with me
14. _____ Has fun with me
15. ____ Tells me s/he loves me
16. ____ Makes special plans for important days
R 17. ____ Tells me that our relationship has no future
18. _____ Leaves me notes out of the blue
19. _____ Lets me know s/he is willing to work out problems
20. _____ Is honest with me
21. _____ Shows respect for my needs
22. _____ Does her/his fair share in the relationship
R 23. ____Does not include me in her/his plans
24. _____ Tells me s/he misses me when I am gone
25. _____ Listens to me
26. _____ Is supportive (even if it means backing off)
27. _____ Gives time and energy to me
28. _____ Tells me s/he is committed to me
29. _____ Tries to see things from my point of view
R 30. ____Withdraws emotionally from me
31. _____ Lets me know s/he trusts me
32. _____ Tells me how s/he feels about me
R 33. ____Points out our differences
34. _____ Works hard to communicate every day
35. _____ Remains faithful to me
36. _____ Tells me s/he doesn’t want anyone else
37. _____ Does things to surprise me

Normative Beliefs (Etcheverry & Agnew, 2004; the items was measured on a seven-point scale, 1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree, R = reverse scored item).

1. Those who are important to me think I should continue in my current romantic relationship.

R 2. Those who are important to me think that I do not have a current romantic relationship worth keeping.

3. Those who are important to me think that this is a good current romantic relationship for me.

R 4. Those who are important to me are not supportive of my current romantic relationship.
Social network overlap item Sprecher and Felmlee (2000).

(The item was scored on a seven-point scale 1 = our social networks do not overlap at all to 7 = our social networks overlap completely).

To what degree do you and your partner share mutual friends?

IOSN measure (Modified IOS scale Aron et al., 1992)
We would like to know about the degree to which you and your partner share mutual friends. Please circle the Venn diagram below that best matches the overlap between you and your partner’s social network. Item was measured using a seven-point scale.

1.  

2.  

3.  

4.  

5.  

6.  

7.
Social network approval/disapproval (Sprecher & Felmlee, 2000)

(Each item was rated using a seven-point scale 1 = very much disapproves to 7 very much approves)

To what degree do you think that each of the following disapproves/approves of your relationship?

- Your family
- Your friends
- Your partner’s family
- Your partner’s friends

(Item was measured on a seven-point scale 1 = discouraged a great deal to 7 = encouraged a great deal)

Overall, how much actual discouragement or encouragement do you get from others to continue seeing your partner?

(Item was measured on a seven-point scale 1 = not at all to 7 = a great deal)

Overall, to what degree do others view you and your partner as a perfect couple who should marry someday?
Emotion-based information. (Simpson, 1990)

Please tell us about the emotions that you have experienced with your partner. Please indicate the degree to which you have experienced each of the following emotions. (The emotions were measured on a seven-point scale 1 = not at all to 7 = experienced a lot).

**Positive emotions:**
- Excited
- Elated
- Surprised
- Joyful
- Happy
- Delighted
- Passionate
- Calm
- Needed
- Serene
- Satisfied
- Wanted/cared for
- Content
- Optimistic

**Negative emotions:**
- Angry
- Fearful
- Jealous
- Irritated
- Hostile
- Distressed
- Disgusted
- Rejected
- Sad
- Guilty
- Worried
- Disappointed
- Depressed
- Lonely
**Relationship Centrality Measure (Agnew et al., 1998)** (Items were scored on a seven-point scale (1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree).

1. My overall feelings of life satisfaction are greatly impacted by events in my romantic life.

2. In comparison to other parts of my life (e.g. school, family, friends, religion, etc.), my relationship with my partner is the most central aspect of my life.

3. I spend most of my time thinking about my relationship partner.

4. When considering all the things that give my life meaning, my relationship with my partner is the most important.

**IOS scale (Aron, Aron, & Smollan, 1992)**

Please indicate which of the pictures above represents your current relationship with your partner. (Item were scored on a seven-point scale 1 = not close to 7 = extremely close)
IOS – Perceived (Tomlinson & Aron, 2013)

Please answer the next question as if you were your partner. That is tell us the answer you think your partner would give if asked. Please indicate which of the pictures above represents your current relationship with your partner. (Item scored on a seven-point scale 1 = not close to 7 = extremely close)

Communal Strength Measure (Mills et al., 2004) (Items was measured on a seven-point scale 1 = not at all to 7 = extremely. R = reverse coded item)

Keeping your partner in mind, please answer the following questions.

1. How high a priority for you is meeting the needs of your partner?
2. How happy do you feel when doing something that helps your partner?
3. How large a benefit would you be likely to give your partner?
4. How large a cost would you incur to meet the needs of your partner?
R 5. How readily can you put the needs of your partner out of your thoughts?
6. How far would you be willing to go to visit your partner?
R 7. How reluctant would you be to sacrifice for your partner?
8. How much would you be willing to give up to benefit your partner?
9. How far would you go out of your way to do something for your partner?
R 10. How easily could you accept not helping your partner?

The items was measured on a seven-point scale (1 = Does not describe me very well to 7 = Does describe me very well. R = reverse coded item).

1. I am good at understanding my partner’s problems.
2. I not only listen to my partner, but I understand what he/she is saying.
3. I very often seem to know how my partner feels.
4. I always know exactly what my partner means.
5. I am able to sense or realize what my partner is feeling.
6. Before criticizing my partner, I try to imagine how I would feel in his/her place.
7. I sometimes try to understand my partner better by imagining how things look from his/her perspective.
8. In my relationship with my partner, I believe that there are two sides to every question and I try to look and think about both sides.
9. I try to look at my partner’s side of a disagreement before I make a decision.
10. When I’m upset with my partner, I usually try to put myself in his/her shoes for a while.
11. Even if my partner has difficulty in saying something, I usually understand what he/she means.
12. I usually do not understand the full meaning of what my partner is saying to me.
13. I am able to appreciate exactly how the things my partner experiences feel to him/her.

The items was measured on a seven-point scale (1 = Does not describe me very well to 7 = Does describe me very well. R = reverse coded item).

1. When involved in an argument with me, my partner is the type of person who will consider and take into account my point of view and compare that with his/her own.
R 2. My partner is not good at understanding my problems.
3. My partner not only listens to what I am saying, but really understands and seems to know where I am coming from.
R 4. My partner does not seem to know how I feel.
5. My partner is able to accurately compare his/her own point of view with mine.
6. My partner evaluates my motivation for doing something before he/she makes judgments about a situation.
R 7. My partner easily becomes impatient with me.
R 8. My partner is not able to put him/herself into my shoes.
R 10. My partner does not sense or realize what I am feeling.
11. My partner realizes what I mean even when I have difficulty saying it.
R 12. My partner does not usually understand the whole meaning of what I say.
13. My partner appreciated how the things I experience feel to me.
14. Before criticizing me, my partner tries to imagine how I feel.
R 15. If my partner thinks he/she is right about something, he/she doesn’t waste much time in listening to my arguments.
16. My partner tries to understand me better by imagining how things look from my perspective.
17. My partner believes that there are two sides to every argument and tries to look at both sides.
R 18. My partner sometimes finds it difficult to see things from my perspective.
19. My partner tries to look at my perspective before making a decision.
20. When my partner is upset with me, he/she tries to put him/herself in my shoes for a while.

Thank you for participating in this survey. Your responses will help us more fully understand people’s relationship behaviors and perceptions of romantic relationships.